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MEDORA LEIGH;

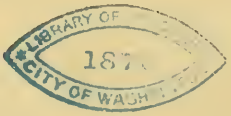
A History and an Autobiography.

EDITED BY

CHARLES MACKAY.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, AND A COMMENTARY ON THE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST LORD BYRON BY MRS. BEECHER STOWE.

"EX FUMO DARE LUCEM."



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PREFACE.

The Editor of the following pages thinks it necessary, in order to prevent misconception, that he should explain in what manner and for what reasons he undertook to bring before the world the sad story of Medora Leigh, and to make his comments and observations upon it. A month or six weeks after the accusations brought against the memory of the illustrious poet by Mrs. Beecher Stowe—on the alleged authority and information of Lady Byron—he received a note from an acquaintance of his boyhood—a friend of thirty years' standing—requesting him to call upon him at his office on a matter of literary interest. He waited upon that gentleman as requested, and received from his hands the autobiography of Medora Leigh, daughter of the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Lord Byron's sister. His advice as to the publication of that narrative, and the documents that accompanied it, was solicited. The MSS. had lain undivulged and unheeded among his papers for twenty-six years, where they would possibly have remained in obscurity for ever—or been committed to the flames—had it not been for Mrs. Beecher Stowe's attack on Lord Byron's memory. The Editor's first impression, after a hasty perusal of the story, was that Medora Leigh might be an impostor. An attentive study of the autobiography and the accompanying documents removed that impression, and convinced him that, whatever and whoever else she might be, Medora Leigh was the undoubted daughter of Lord Byron's sister. His next impression was that, under all the circumstances, the suppression of the whole story—if it could be effected—was desirable. This course he at once recommended. The custodian of the papers—the gentleman into whose hands they had come at the time when he zealously but ineffectually endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between Miss Leigh and her aunt, Lady Byron—objected to the destruction of the MSS., feeling convinced that the truth was the truth, and that its promulgation could do no harm except to the guilty, whomsoever they might be. The Editor several times went over all the documents, and carefully compared the statements contained in them with those made by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and with all the contributions to the perplexing story of Lord and Lady Byron's separation in 1816, which have gone the round of the newspapers and periodicals for the last three months. He came at last to the conclusion that they disproved all Mrs. Stowe's allega-

tions relative to the year of the separation, and fixed the date of the first time when the charge was brought against Mrs. Leigh to the year 1831, seven years after Lord Byron's death, and of the charge against Lord Byron himself to the year 1840. He was also of opinion that he had discovered something like a clue to the authors of the scandal and to their motives. The result of his deliberations on the subject was the present Volume, where the reader will find an examination of the two stories of Mrs. Stowe and of Miss Leigh; together with the reasons for his belief that the charge against Lord Byron's memory is not only unproved and unprovable, but untrue, and the result of a conspiracy in which Lady Byron had no part, but of which she was the dupe and the victim.

December, 1869.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE STORY OF LORD AND LADY BYRON, AS RELATED BY MRS. STOWE.

"Whate'er my sins might be, *thou* wert not sent
To be the Nemesis who should requite—
Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.
Mercy is for the merciful!—if thou
Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.
Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep!—
Yes! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel
A hollow agony which will not heal,
For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep;
Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap
The bitter harvest in a woe as real!
I have had many foes, but none like thee.

Lord Byron. On hearing that Lady Byron was ill.

MEDORA LEIGH.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Seldom has a man been more cordially praised or more bitterly blamed than Lord Byron. During his brilliant and stormy, but too brief career, his name was continually in the mouths of men. His fame was not confined to his own country, but extended over two hemispheres, as that of the greatest, most powerful, most original poet of his age. His admirers and his detractors were equally busy with the virtues and the failings of his character. The young, the sensitive, the hopeful, the romantic of both sexes, ranged themselves enthusiastically upon his side, and gave themselves up unrestrainedly to the delirious fascination of his poetry; while the old, the staid, the prosaic, and the cynical, though carried away by the current of public opinion so far as to admit the splendour of his genius, declared that he turned it to evil account, and that the fire which burned and sparkled in his writings was not the healthful caloric of Heaven, but the baneful and sulphurous flame from the "other place." His fate was similar to that of his illustrious predecessor, Lord Bacon. He was held to be among the greatest of men by his genius, and among the meanest by his vices. It cannot be said that either the admiration or the opposition which his writings excited was unnatural. Their beauties were palpable, and shot with electrical force into hearts ready to receive and be stirred by them. On the other hand, he shocked so many prejudices, meddled with so many sacred subjects, in a manner that jarred upon the ears, and set upon edge the teeth of old-world orthodoxy, both in faith and in politics, and unfurled so boldly the revolutionary flag in an age that, although ripening, was not quite ripe enough for revolutionary action, that, even if his private character had been white as the untrodden snow upon the summits of the Himalayas, and he had been that "faultless monster" who was spoken of by a great poet of a previous age as one whom the world never saw, Calumny would, nevertheless, have fixed her dirty claws upon him, and invented crimes with which to bespatter his reputation. The people of this more tolerant age can scarcely understand the enmities which he excited, any more than they can share the extraordinary enthusiasm evoked by his poems when they first appeared. In Byron's age poetry was written for *men* and women; in ours, if not written for schoolgirls, it falls unheeded from the press. Nevertheless, his poetic fame has come down to us unsullied from our fathers, and his works remain to us—the imperishable records of a mighty, if a wayward, genius. At his early death—scarcely in middle manhood—when the effervescent exuberance of his youthful intellect and imagination was just beginning to mellow into "drink divine," his place was permanently fixed in our national Walhalla. There he stands, and will continue to stand as long as our language endures, second only to Shakespeare and Milton, and far above the Chaucers, the Spensers, the Drydens, and the Popes—far also above all his contemporaries, Sir Walter Scott alone excepted.

It is true that long after his untimely death the breath of slander continued to sully his name. Much dirt had been flung at him, and some of it had stuck; but the imputations against him were gradually growing less and less distinct. His name was less and less in the path of the world's memory and the world's passions, till it seemed as if nothing were wanting but the beneficent touch of Time to remove the last speck, real or imaginary, that dimmed the brightness of his glory. The world has long since ceased to hear of the errors, the follies, and the vices of Shakespeare, if he had any — which is certainly as probable as it is possible. There are no stories, Heaven be praised! about Mrs. Shakespeare, or the second-best bed, which her lord left her by will, out of which to manufacture lies for the gratification of the evil-minded and the poor of soul, who love to believe that the greatest of men would probably rank among the smallest, if Mrs. Grundy only knew all about them. Milton's fame is not attacked on account of any of the Mistresses Milton; and even the amours of Robert Burns among the fair serving-lasses of Dumfries and Ayrshire have ceased to afford pabulum for the voracious maw of the Slander that loves to feed upon the peccadilloes no less than upon the graver offences of the intellectually great. And there was a hope that the illustrious Byron might be left in his grave, alone in his glory, with none to rake up the ashes of his fiery youth—to pry into his faults with microscopic eye, and hold up his memory to public shame.

Unluckily, however, this was not to be. There came to England, in 1852–3, an American, one whom the Americans themselves call a Yankee —an ultra-Yankee—Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, who had rendered her name familiar to all the English-speaking people of the world by a sensational novel, semi-political, semi-religious, entitled "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of which the objects appeared to be the apotheosis of the negro (or, as her countrymen call him, the "nigger"), and the defamation of the slaveowners of the Southern States of the American Union, for holding the blacks in bondage. It is true that the abolition of slavery involved, in the course of time, the possible abolition of the negro. But this was nothing to a professional philanthropist. The work excited an extraordinary sensation both in America and in Great Britain. In America its gross exaggerations, no less than its positive falsehoods, exasperated the whole white population of the South, greatly offended the Conservative or Democratic party of the North, and was received with shouts of joy and welcome only by the small but earnest and grim party of Puritans and ultra-Republicans of New England, who had made up their minds that slavery should be abolished, *per fas aut nefas*, and who were prepared, as they asserted then, and for years previously and subsequently, to break up the Union, rather than submit to the monstrous evil of being participators in a Government that recognised slavery—the "sum of all villanies"—as legal in any portion, however small, of its vast domain. In Great Britain, where a negro is rarely seen, and where the antipathy of race, as it exists in America against both the red and the black man, is unknown for want of objects of contact, the quasi-novel was widely read by classes who never read ordinary romances, and look upon them as idle and worthless, if not as profane and mischievous productions. It was a novelty, and hit the taste of the moment, though it has now sunk into an oblivion from which it is not likely ever again to be extricated. Lady Byron was an earnest and sincere believer in the guilt and wrong of slavery —was what the Americans call a nigger-worshipper; and when William and Ellen Crafts, two fugitive slaves from the Southern States, sought and found refuge in London, they were "fostered," says Mrs. Stowe, "under Lady Byron's patronising care." An intimacy sprang up between the two ladies on the anti-slavery and negro question—the chief, though by no means the only, sympathetic bond between them. They were both literary; both what used to be called "blues;" both professional philanthropists; both strong-minded women; both celebrated, though in very different ways; and of tastes, and modes of looking at men and things, and at the world in general, that seem to have been remarkably congenial. The intimacy thus formed soon expanded into an ardent friendship, such as commonly occurs only among gushing young ladies who think that they have suffered long at the hands of the other sex, or who look down upon that sex with philosophic contempt from the lofty pedestal of moral virtue to which they imagine that they have clambered. When Mrs. Stowe returned to her own country, after a brief visit, full of "Sunny Memories," which afterwards found fame and profit in a book, a correspondence was kept up between the friends. On the second visit of the American authoress to London the intimacy was renewed, and she learned more and more to love the celebrated and philanthropic lady, the sorrows of whose early wedded life and widowhood had long been the theme of the world's wonder or pity for more than a quarter of a century. Mrs. Stowe was a hero-worshipper, as far as related to Lady Byron, and saw in her the incarnation of all that was gentle, beautiful, amiable, and divine in woman. She thus describes her as she appeared to her eyes in 1856:*

"Lady Byron, though slight and almost infantine in her bodily presence, had *the soul not only of an angelic woman, but of a strong reasoning man.* Among all with whom the writer's experience brought her into connection in England, there was none who impressed her so strongly as Lady Byron. There was an *almost supernatural power of moral divination*, a grasp of the very highest and most comprehensive things, that made her lightest opinion singularly impressive.

"*Never has more divine strength of faith and love existed in woman* (than in Lady Byron). Out of the depths of her own loving and merciful nature she gained such views of the Divine love and mercy as made all hopes possible. . . . She never doubted her husband's salvation. There was no soul of whose future she despaired. Such was her boundless faith in the redeeming power of Love. . . . *To talk with her seemed to the writer the nearest possible approach to talk with one of the spirits of the just made perfect.*

"She was gentle, artless, approachable as a little child; with ready outflowing sympathy for the cares, and sorrows, and interests of all who approached her; with a naïve and gentle playfulness, that adorned without hiding the breadth and strength of her mind; and, above all, with a clear divining moral discrimination, never mistaking wrong for right in the slightest shade, yet with a mercifulness that made allowance for every weakness, and pitied every sin.

"*There was so much of Christ in her, that to have seen her seemed to have been drawn near to Heaven!* She was one of those few friends from whom absence cannot divide—whose mere presence in this world seems always a help to every

* "The True Story of Lady Byron's Married Life" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, September, 1869).

generous thought, a strength to every good purpose, a comfort in every sorrow.

"*She lived so nearly on the confines of the spiritual world that she seemed, while living, already to see into it.*

"We" (Mrs. Stowe) "have already spoken of that singular sense of the reality of the spiritual world, which seemed to encompass Lady Byron during the last part of her life, and which *made her words and actions seem more like those of a blessed being, detached from earth, than of an ordinary mortal!* All her modes of looking at things, all her motives of action, all her involuntary exhibitions of emotion, were so high above any common level, and so entirely regulated by the most unworldly causes, that it would seem difficult to make the ordinary world understand exactly how they seemed to lie before her mind. What impressed the writer more strongly than anything else was Lady Byron's perfect conviction that her husband was now a redeemed spirit; that he looked back with pain, shame, and regret on all that was unworthy in his past life; and that, if he could speak or could act in the case, he would desire to prevent the circulation of further base falsehoods, and of seductive poetry, which had been made the vehicle of morbid and unworthy passions.

"While speaking on this subject" (the redemption of Lord Byron's soul) "her pale ethereal face became luminous with a heavenly radiance. There was something so sublime in her belief of the victory of Love over Evil, that Faith with her seemed to have become Sight.

"Lady Byron was the most remarkable woman that England has produced in this century."

Such was Lady Byron, in 1856, to the eye and fancy of the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." To Mrs. Stowe, her friend was not only a negrophilist, a spiritualist, and a universalist, but the most angelic and most perfect of women and of human beings. The natures of the seraphim who know most, and of the cherubim who love most, were, in Mrs. Stowe's imagination, blended together in the sweet human nature of her friend. We need not pause to weigh the powers of Mrs. Stowe as a limner of character. No doubt Lady Byron shone, in her mind, with all the supernal glow of colour with which she depicted her excellences—a fact which may leave the good faith of the limner undisputed, without compelling the less enthusiastic or bewildered onlooker to regard the portrait as faithful. All the world agreed, in Lady Byron's lifetime—even her unhappy husband never disputed the fact—that she was a good woman. She was never accused of any crime, of any vice, even of any great or particular failing. The worst that was ever said of her was that she was cold and unsympathetic; and that, had she been less cold and more sympathetic, her erring husband might have been converted into as good a husband as he was a poet. This verdict has never been reversed—never was sought to be reversed—until Mrs. Stowe thrust (we must think without the slightest authority or justification) the story of Lady Byron's wedded life before the world, and challenged its belief in a story that, even if it were true, ought never to have been told; and that, if false, would prove the narrator (if Lady Byron told it as Mrs. Stowe tells it) to be either the victim of an extraordinary hallucination, or of a conspiracy of others to deceive her. If neither of these, she was the author of the story herself. Whether true or false, the story was divulged unnecessarily by Mrs. Stowe, and for a reason that was and could be no justification. Lady Byron was, in the year 1856—if we are to credit Mrs. Stowe—brought to believe, in some mysterious manner, that although she had kept silence no less than for forty years on the subject of her separation from her husband, and of the "crime" which he had committed against her, against man, and against God (such it was represented to be, whatever was its specific name), that the time had come when it was necessary to tell the whole truth—not for the sake of truth, if Mrs. Stowe is to be believed, but with the object of stopping the sale, or at all events of diminishing the popularity, of Lord Byron's poems, many cheap editions of which, in consequence of the expiry of Mr. Murray's copyright and other causes, were issuing from the press! This paltry, this mean, unworthy justification, cannot be accepted as sufficient for the publication of so hideous a story. Would any sane person attempt to prevent the publication of the Psalms of David—wrung from the agony of a contrite and remorseful heart—because David committed an awful crime when he sent Uriah, the man whose wife he coveted and seduced, to perish in the front of the battle, well knowing, and intending, that he would there be killed? Or, coming down to a later period, would any reasonable being endeavour to stop the circulation of "Tam o'Shanter," "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and "A Man's a Man for a' that," because the incontinence of Robert Burns was a scandal to his neighbourhood during his lifetime? The "angelic" Lady Byron, aggrieved by the popularity of her husband's poems—especially by the cheap editions—was, if Mrs. Stowe did not misunderstand and has not misrepresented her, moved to tell, for the first time in her life, the great and fearful secret which she had carried about with her for forty years. The circumstances under which Mrs. Stowe was selected, out of all the persons in the wide world, to be her confidante, are better told in Mrs. Stowe's own words than they would be in any *résumé* by another pen.* They are as follow:—

* "The True Story of Lady Byron's Married Life" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, September, 1869).

"On the occasion of a second visit to England, in 1856, the writer received a note from Lady Byron, indicating that she wished to have some private confidential conversation upon important subjects, and inviting her for that purpose to spend a day with her at her country-seat near London.

"The writer went and spent a day with Lady Byron alone, and the object of the visit was explained to her. Lady Byron was in such a state of health that her physicians had warned her that she had very little time to live. She was engaged in those duties and reviews which every thoughtful person finds necessary, who is coming deliberately and with open eyes to the boundaries of another life.

* * * * *

"As Lady Byron's whole life had been passed in the most heroic self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, the question was now proposed to her, whether one more act of self-denial was not required of her before leaving this world—namely, to declare the absolute truth, no matter at what expense to her own feelings?

"For this purpose, it was her desire to recount the whole history to a person of *another country*, and entirely out of the whole sphere of *personal and local feelings*, which might be supposed to influence those in the country and station in life where the events really happened, in order that she might be helped by such a person's views in making up an opinion as to her own duty.

"The interview had almost the solemnity of a deathbed avowal. Lady Byron recounted the history which has been embodied in this article, and gave to the writer a paper containing a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed."

The various charges which the ethereal lady—so gentle—so placid—so near akin to the angels in heaven—speaking, as Mrs. Stowe says, "with almost the solemnity of a deathbed avowal," brought against her husband, who had been two-and-thirty years in his grave, amounted, as we gather from the rambling, confused, and very anachronistical statement of Mrs. Stowe, to no less than nine, which we shall disinter *seriatim* from the mass of verbiage in which they occur:—

First. On offering marriage to Miss Milbanke (afterwards Lady Byron) for the first time, and being refused by her, with many expressions of friendship and interest, Lord Byron took the refusal so much to heart, that during the two years ensuing he carried his affections elsewhere—bestowed them upon a married woman—that woman his own sister! "From the height," says Mrs. Stowe, "which might have made him the happy husband of a noble woman" had Miss Milbanke accepted him (Mrs. Stowe *must* mean this, though she does not say so)—"he fell into the depths of a secret adulterous intrigue with a blood-relation, so near in consanguinity that discovery must have been utter ruin and expulsion from civilised society. From henceforth his damning guilty secret became the ruling force in his life, holding him with a morbid fascination, yet filling him with remorse and anguish, and insane dread of detection."

After two years of this kind of life, as Mrs. Stowe informs us, his friends, seeing him unhappy, and not knowing the cause, pressed upon him to marry. He took the advice, again proposed to Miss Milbanke, and was this time accepted. The question arises: How did Lady Byron know this fact—if fact it were? Who told her? It could not be either of the two parties to the unholy intrigue, which was so little suspected at the time by the party most intimately concerned, the husband of the incriminated lady, that he lived happily with her for many years, until his death, and had four children by her—in addition to the three which he possessed at the time—which, if it were two years before Lord Byron's marriage, must have been in 1813 and 1814.

Lady Byron certainly did not know anything of this dreadful story at the time, or she would scarcely have married Lord Byron. On this point Mrs. Stowe—speaking, as alleged, at Lady Byron's dictation, and with her authority—is sufficiently clear: "When he" (Lord Byron, after being accepted as the young lady's future husband) "went to visit Miss Milbanke's parents, she was struck with his manner and appearance. She saw him moody and gloomy, evidently wrestling with dark and desperate thoughts, and anything but what a happy and accepted lover should be. She sought an interview with him alone, and told him she had observed that he was not happy in the engagement; and *magnanimously* added, that if, on review, he found he had been mistaken in the nature of his feelings, she would immediately release him, and they should remain only as friends. Overcome with the conflict of his feelings, Lord Byron fainted away! Miss Milbanke was convinced that his heart must really be deeply involved in an attachment with reference to which he showed such strength of emotion; and she spoke no more of the dissolution of the engagement."

It follows indubitably from this statement, if a true one, which it very likely is, that before her marriage the future Lady Byron neither knew nor suspected the incestuous and adulterous connection specified by Mrs. Stowe.

Second. A charge of brutality is brought against Lord Byron: of brutality at a time when a man with the most ordinary feelings of manhood—even of a boor and a clodhopper, much more of a gentleman and scholar—would have been particularly gentle to a lady whom he had a few minutes before accepted at the altar as his bride. "The moment," says Mrs. Stowe, "the carriage-doors were shut upon the bridegroom

and bride, the paroxysm of remorse and despair —*unrepenting* remorse and angry despair—broke forth upon her gentle head. 'You might have spared me this, Madam; you had all in your own power when I offered to you first. *Then* you might have made me what you pleased. *Now* you will find that you have married a devil!'" If Lady Byron told Mrs. Stowe this, and believed it, she must have had a marvellous conceit of the mischief she had done in first rejecting the man whom she afterwards accepted, and a correspondingly high appreciation of her own great powers and merits. But the whole story partakes too strongly of the skill of the romancist and of the sensation-monger, and shows too much of the art apparent in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to be accepted as Lady Byron's story as told by herself. Besides, it is contradicted, before it was heard, by Lord Byron himself, who owns that he was somewhat vexed and annoyed on finding, when he got into the carriage with his bride, that a lady's-maid had been stuck in between them. Possibly Lord Byron's annoyance on the occasion, to which he very good-naturedly and good-humouredly referred in a letter written at the time to his not very judicious friend, Thomas Moore, might be explained on the very innocent and very natural supposition, that the bridegroom would have liked to have put his arms round his bride's waist, and given the conjugal kiss of strong affection which he had just been privileged to bestow upon her, and which he had too much delicacy of mind to indulge in before a third person, even if that person had been a lady instead of a domestic servant.

Third. The adulterous and incestuous connection, commenced before marriage, brought about by Miss Milbanke's first refusal—as Mrs. Stowe would have the world believe—was continued *after* marriage. "There came," she says (but she does not inform us how, or from whence it came), "an hour of revelation—an hour when, in a manner which left no kind of room for doubt, Lady Byron saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover, and understood that she was expected to be the cloak and the accomplice of this infamy. Many women would have been utterly crushed by such a disclosure; some would have fled from him immediately, and exposed and denounced the crime. Lady Byron did neither. When all the hope of womanhood died out of her heart, there arose within her, stronger, purer, and brighter, that immortal kind of love such as God feels for the sinner—the love of which Jesus spoke, that makes the one wanderer of more account than the 'ninety-and-nine that went not astray.' She would neither leave him nor betray him, nor yet would she for one moment justify his sin. And hence came *two years* of convulsive struggle, in which sometimes, for a while, the good angel seemed to gain the ground, and then the evil one returned with sevenfold vehemence."

As Lord and Lady Byron only lived for thirteen months together, the "two years" of this remarkable charge, made by a living woman against a dead man's memory, must be taken as a proof of carelessness on the part of the narrator—suggestive not alone of carelessness in this one respect, but of possible inaccuracy in others. If the story be true, Lady Byron, in condoning such a sin, must have been a person of superhuman coldness and absence of passion—a pure abstraction, without any of the loveable human weakness that even when wrong takes all of us who are worth taking out of the line of geometry and mathematics, and vindicates our possession of blood and feelings.

Fourth. Lord Byron having committed, and being determined to continue to commit, this sin, endeavored to undermine the faith of his long-suffering and most forgiving lady in the doctrines of Christianity in which she had been nurtured, and to which she hopefully clung. "Lord Byron," says Mrs. Stowe, "argued his case (incest and adultery), with himself and with her, with all the sophistries of his powerful mind. He repudiated Christianity as an authority, and asserted the right of every human being to follow out what he called the impulses of nature. Subsequently" (in 1821—five years and more after his separation from his wife) "he introduced into one of his dramas (Cain) the reasoning by which he justified himself in incest." This charge, as regards the dramatic poem of "Cain," whether made by Lady Byron or Mrs. Stowe, is almost too monstrous for comment. If poets are to be accused of the crimes which they depict (and in the case of Cain and Adah the incest was not incest, inasmuch as Adah was the only marriageable woman in the world, except Eve, his mother, at the time when Cain espoused her), Shakespeare must be considered a murderer, and Milton a blasphemer.

Fifth. Having failed to undermine and destroy her religious convictions, Lord Byron endeavoured to corrupt his wife's morals, so as to induce her to wink at, or prudently ignore, the sins which he was determined to commit. "His first attempt," says Mrs. Stowe, "had been to make Lady Byron his accomplice: by sophistry, by destroying her faith in Christianity, and confusing her sense of right and wrong, to bring her into the ranks of those convenient women who regard the marriage tie only as a friendly alliance to cover license on both sides. When he described to her the continental latitude—the good-humoured marriages, in which complaisant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for each other's infidelities, and gave her to understand that in this way alone she could have a peaceful and friendly life with him—she answered him simply, 'I am too truly your friend to do this.'" Supposing this charge to be true—of which there is no proof except Mrs. Stowe's assertion, unless

Lady Byron has left it in a document which can be produced—what becomes of that angelic charity which thinks no evil, and repeats none, for which Lady Byron is so enthusiastically praised by her romantic confidante; and with what purpose was such a charge disinterred from the grave of him who could not answer?

Sixth. "When Lord Byron found that he had to do with one who would not yield—who knew him fully, who could not be blinded, and would not be deceived—he determined to rid himself of her altogether." If Lady Byron's assertion, made to Mrs. Stowe forty years after the event, be good for anything, Lord Byron's assertion, made immediately after the event, and repeated, in and out of season, at every convenient opportunity during the eight years that he lived after the separation, ought certainly to count for as much, and to be fairly weighed in the balance of evidence. Byron's account of the separation bears all the impress of contemporaneous truth and sincerity; Lady Byron's (or Mrs. Stowe's) that of an afterthought, colored and distorted by the feelings and prejudices of the interval. If Lord Byron drove his lady away from him—of which there is not a particle of proof—he earnestly, penitently, solemnly, and affectionately urged her to return to him. The proofs of this are manifold and overwhelming, and Lady Byron, when alive, never ventured to deny them.

Seventh. A renewed charge of "unmanly brutality" to a weak and suffering woman, to whom he was bound by the holiest and tenderest ties. "It was," says Mrs. Stowe, "when the state of affairs between Lady Byron and her husband seemed darkest and most hopeless, that the only child of their union was born. Lord Byron's treatment of his lady during the sensitive period that preceded the birth of his child, and during her confinement, was marked by paroxysms of unmanly brutality, for which the only charity on her part was the supposition of insanity. . . . . A day or two after the birth of this child, Lord Byron came suddenly into Lady Byron's room, and told her that her mother was dead. It was an utter falsehood, but it was a specimen of the many nameless injuries and cruelties by which he expressed his hatred of her." If these allegations were true, and Lady Byron accounted for such aberrations from the line of gentlemanly, and even of human behaviour, towards a lady in her delicate position, by the allegation of insanity, it is scarcely consistent with the angelic character given to Lady Byron by her friend Mrs. Stowe, that she should mention such charges to his injury after the lapse of forty years.

Eighth. This charge, though reproduced by Mrs. Stowe, was not originally made by her, but by Lady Byron herself, in a letter to Thomas Moore, who had submitted to her, in 1830, the proof-sheets of his "Life of Byron," and requested to know if she had any remark to make upon passages referring to herself. In this letter she says—speaking of the inexplicable separation of 1816, and six years after Byron's death:—

"The facts are: I left London for Kirkby-Mallory, the residence of my father and mother, on the 15th of January, 1816. LORD BYRON HAD SIGNIFIED TO ME IN WRITING, JANUARY 6TH, HIS ABSOLUTE DESIRE THAT I SHOULD LEAVE LONDON ON THE EARLIEST DAY THAT I COULD CONVENIENTLY FIX. It was not safe for me to undertake the fatigue of a journey sooner than the 15th. Previously to my departure, it had been strongly impressed upon my mind that Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity. This opinion was derived in a great measure from the communications made me by his nearest relatives and personal attendant, who had more opportunity than myself for observing him during the latter part of my stay in town. It was even represented to me that he was in danger of destroying himself.

"*With the concurrence of his family*, I had consulted Dr. Baillie as a friend, January 8th, respecting the supposed malady. On acquainting him with the state of the case, and with Lord Byron's desire that I should leave London, Dr. Baillie thought that my absence might be advisable as an experiment, assuming the fact of mental derangement; for Dr. Baillie, not having had access to Lord Byron, could not pronounce a positive opinion on that point. He enjoined that, in correspondence with Lord Byron, I should avoid all but light and soothing topics. Under these impressions I left London, determined to follow the advice given by Dr. Baillie. Whatever might have been the conduct of Lord Byron towards me from the time of my marriage, yet, supposing him to be in a state of mental alienation, it was not for *me*, nor for any person of common humanity, to manifest at that moment a sense of injury."

Mrs. Stowe appends to this extract—the main fact stated in which (Lady Byron's expulsion) is denied by the whole tenor of Lord Byron's correspondence and conversations with his friends and acquaintances, and constantly reiterated by him, that Lady Byron left him, he knew not why, with a promise to return, which she did not keep—her opinion, that "nothing more than this letter from Lord Byron is necessary to substantiate the fact, that she did not *leave* her husband, but *was driven* from him." She adds the utterly gratuitous allegation, that he expelled her in order that "he might follow out the guilty infatuation that was consuming him, without being tortured by her imploring face, and by the silent power of her presence and her prayers in his house."

In connection with this charge—that Lord Byron gave her notice to quit nine days before

she finally departed, with full knowledge of Lord Byron's crime—how is the world to understand the following passage in Mrs. Stowe's own story?

"Only a few days before Lady Byron left him for ever, Lord Byron sent Murray manuscripts, in Lady Byron's handwriting, of the 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina,' and wrote:—

"'I am very glad that the handwriting was a favourable omen of the *morale* of the piece; but you must not trust to that, for my copyist would write out anything I desired, in all the ignorance of innocence.'"

This does not look like the action of a woman driven away against her will by her husband; but very like, it seems to us, the action of a woman who was playing a part, who did not wish to arouse her husband's suspicions—but who, being resolved to leave him, deceived him to the last moment, by the display of innocent affection, and sympathy with his literary pursuits.

Ninth. This is the crowning charge, and for the first time brings Lady Byron face to face with her husband and his alleged paramour and sister, the Hon. Augusta Leigh. "On the day of her departure" (when she says she was driven away, and when Lord Byron says she went away of her own free will, with a falsehood upon her lips), "she passed," as Mrs. Stowe informs us, "by the door of his room, and stopped to caress his favourite spaniel, which was lying there; and she confessed to a friend the weakness of feeling a willingness even to be something as humble as that poor little creature, might she only be allowed to remain and watch over him. She went into the room where he and the *partner of his sins* were sitting together, and said, 'Byron, I come to say good-bye,' offering at the same time her hand. Lord Byron put his hands behind him, retreated to the mantelpiece, and, looking round on the two that stood there, with a sarcastic smile, said, 'When shall we three meet again?' Lady Byron answered: 'In heaven, I trust.' And those were her last words to him on earth."

If this bit of romance could be accepted as true (Lord Byron's dog, by the way, not a little spaniel, but a large and powerful animal, familiar by description to all the readers of his Life and Letters), Lady Byron, by her own and Mrs. Stowe's showing, was so meek, so spiritless, so abject, so stupidly forgiving, so unconscious of the respect due to herself and to the outraged laws of God and man, that she preferred to be a dog sleeping at the door of an incestuous adulterer, rather than an honest and outraged woman, leaving the adulterer's presence, with forgiveness, perhaps, in her heart, but with disapproval, if not scorn, in her mind. This is not a flattering picture to draw of Lady Byron, but it is Mrs. Stowe who has drawn it.

These nine charges, however distinct as they may appear, all resolve themselves into a cluster around the one great and fearful charge, that two years before, and during the whole of his wedded life until its close, on Lady Byron's departure from his roof, never again to return, Lord Byron was guilty of incest with a married lady, whom Mrs. Stowe does not name, but who is distinctly pointed at, and can be, and means no other, than his father's daughter, his half-sister, the Hon. Augusta Leigh. Of this incestuous and adulterous crime, Lady Byron, it appears, told Mrs. Stowe in 1856, thirty-two years after her husband's death, that there was issue, one child, a daughter. Again, to prevent involuntary injustice to Mrs. Stowe, we quote her own words:—"There was," she says, "an unfortunate child of sin, born with the curse upon her, over whose wayward nature Lady Byron watched with a mother's tenderness. She was the one who could have patience when the patience of every one else failed; and though the task was a difficult one, from the strange abnormal propensities to evil in the subject of it, yet Lady Byron never faltered, and never gave over till death took the responsibility from her hands." Though this might have been the child of some other sin, and not the issue either of incest or of adultery, it has been taken by all readers to mean the child of Lord Byron and his sister; and it is clearly Mrs. Stowe's meaning so to consider and represent it; and to depict the more than mortal—the heavenly Christian charity of Lady Byron, in taking notice of, and acting a mother's part towards it. On this point, the strange and melancholy history of Medora Leigh, to be subsequently related in these pages, will throw additional light. Meanwhile let us proceed with Mrs. Stowe, as the denunciator of Lord Byron, to learn, if possible—supposing that she be the faithful reporter of the sad story which Lady Byron confided to her ear, and fell into no misunderstanding of Lady Byron's words or meaning—on what impulse, and by what authority, she unfolded to the world an accusation against the dead, and of which no living man or woman was able to establish the truth. Mrs. Stowe shall tell us. She expected that, when Lady Byron died in 1860, four years after she had become the confidante of her great wrongs, and her, till then, unuttered and unutterable sorrows, that some one would have come forward in Lady Byron's behalf with a memoir of her life, setting forth her true character and the exact facts of her story. No such memoir appeared. Nevertheless Mrs. Stowe still waited and hoped, though labouring with the weight of a secret apparently much too weighty for her to bear. At last, the Countess of Guiccioli, widow of the eccentric Marquis de Boissy, who was very fond of individual Englishmen, but detested, with a fantastic as well as fanatical hatred, the collective British nation and its Government, published, in the early summer of 1869,

her "Recollections of Lord Byron," who after his expatriation from England in 1816, and during his residence in Italy, became, in Italian fashion, her *cavaliere serviente*, or *cicisbeo*. This work, with its laudation of Lord Byron's character and poetry, and its allegations of cold-heartedness and want of sympathy, and general unfitness to be a poet's wife, made against Lady Byron (for nothing severer was said), was too much for the patience of Mrs. Stowe. Her secret was eating her heart away. She could keep silence no longer. As "no person in England," according to her belief, "would, at that time, take the responsibility of relating the true history which was to clear Lady Byron's memory," she, an American, undertook it, without fear or scruple; though she would not have done so but for the wicked Guiccioli. She declared, in the "Atlantic Monthly," and in "Macmillan's Magazine," in which two publications the story appeared simultaneously, that all the materials of the story were left in her hands *unreservedly* by Lady Byron, and that *to her judgment alone was left the use that should be made of them.* "Had this melancholy story (of Lord Byron) been allowed to sleep by Madame Guiccioli," no public use would have been made of this knowledge; but the appearance of a popular attack on the character of Lady Byron called for a vindication, and the true history of her married life was therefore related.

Unless Lady Byron's intellect failed in her declining years, which no one has asserted, but which might not very uncharitably be supposed, it can scarcely be thought that, with the remarkable and, in fact, the cruel reticence which she displayed for forty years, she would have been goaded into the betrayal of so carefully kept a secret, and of such an odious chapter in her husband's life, if it were true, by such a hash of old materials as was given to the world by the vain and foolish though once lovely and fascinating Madame Guiccioli. Lady Byron, if she were only a tenth part as magnanimous as Mrs. Stowe describes her to have been, could have well afforded to despise the attacks, the insinuations, and the second-hand criticism of the fair Italian. But Mrs. Stowe seems to have craved the notoriety which Lady Byron all her life avoided; justifying, in a remarkable manner, the truth of the old adage, that our friends continually do us more harm than our enemies.

The completion of the story remains to be told. When Lady Byron discovered her husband's criminality with his half-sister, and was "driven" from his house, as alleged by herself and by Mrs. Stowe —fled from it of her own free will, and under a false pretence, as alleged by Lord Byron himself at the time and afterwards, till within a few weeks or days of his "death,"— Lady Byron made but one condition with him. "*She had him in her power, and he stood at her mercy.* She exacted only that the unhappy partner of his sins should not follow him out of England, and that the ruinous intrigue should be given up."

Now, Mrs. Leigh, alleged to be the partner of Lord Byron's sins, was to the certain knowledge of Lady Byron at this time, and for years afterwards, Lady Byron's particular friend and intimate associate, as will appear from her own letters; and was, moreover, living quietly, and to all appearance happily, with her husband. She had four children, all supposed by him to be his, and born in lawful wedlock. One of these children, the youngest, Elizabeth Medora, was born in 1815, the same year as Lady Byron's own daughter, Augusta Ada. This daughter, so dearly beloved by Lord as well as by Lady Byron, would not, most people would think, have been called by the name borne by Mrs. Leigh had Lady Byron supposed her at that time to be, as Mrs. Stowe expresses it, "the unhappy partner of Lord Byron's guilt." More than this, Mrs. Leigh continued to live with her husband, who had no such suspicions of his wife as haunted the mind of Lady Byron—if such positive knowledge as Mrs. Stowe claims for her can be designated by such a weak word as "suspicion." For more than twenty years after the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, Colonel and the Hon. Augusta Leigh lived together as man and wife; in the course of which time three more children, or seven in all, were born to them. This, to say the least of it, is a remarkable circumstance as affecting the truth of Mrs. Stowe's narrative: nor is this the only incomprehensible portion of the tale; or how could Lady Byron — unless she were either a consummate hypocrite or a very exceptionable piece of mortal clay, without wholesome human blood in her veins—write to such a woman as Mrs. Leigh must be considered, if the story were not the growth of a much later period of Lady Byron's life, with the affection, the cordiality, and confidence which one virtuous woman feels for another as virtuous as herself, and whom she deems worthy to be treated as her friend? The letters, of which the genuineness is guaranteed on the unimpeachable authority of Mr. Murray and the "Quarterly Review," appeared in that publication in October, 1869. The first, undated, was, in the opinion of the "Quarterly Review," and as internal evidence would show, written in Lord Byron's house in Piccadilly shortly before Lady Byron left, and sent to Mrs. Leigh, who was also at the same time an inmate of the troubled household, who had come thither as a peacemaker, whose presence was equally acceptable to both parties. Mrs. Leigh, it should be added—and the circumstance, if it were not for Lady Byron's letters, might be taken as partly corroborative of Mrs. Stowe's recital—remained in the house for several weeks after Lady Byron left, and until she knew that the rupture was

final, and that her intercession and good offices were no longer available.

I.

"You will think me very foolish, but I have tried two or three times, and cannot talk to you of your departure with a decent visage—so let me say one word in this way to spare my philosophy. With the expectations which I have, I never will nor can ask you to stay one moment longer than you are inclined to do. It would [be] the worst return for all I ever received from you. But, in this at least, I am 'truth itself' when I say that, whatever the situation may be, there is no one whose society is dearer to me, or can contribute more to my happiness. These feelings will not change under any circumstances, and I should be grieved if you did not understand them. Should you hereafter condemn me I shall not love you less. I will say no more. Judge for yourself about going or staying. I wish you to consider yourself, if you could be wise enough to do that for the first time in your life.

"Thine, A. I. B.

"Addressed on the cover 'To the Hon. Mrs. Leigh.'"

II.

"Kirkby Mallory, January 16, 1816.
(The day after she left London.)

"My dearest A.,—It is my great comfort that you are in Piccadilly."

III.

"Kirkby Mallory, January 23, 1816.

"Dearest A.,—I know you feel for me as I do for you, and perhaps I am better understood than I think. You have been, ever since I knew you, my best comforter, and will so remain, unless you grow tired of the office, which may well be."

IV.

"January 25, 1816.

"My dearest Augusta,—Shall I still be your sister? I must resign my rights to be so considered; but I don't think that will make any difference in the kindness I have so uniformly experienced from you."

V.

"Kirkby Mallory, February 3, 1816.

"My dearest Augusta,—You are desired by your brother to ask if my father has acted with my concurrence in proposing a separation. He has. It cannot be supposed that, in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating, in a detailed manner, the reasons which will not only justify this measure, but compel me to take it; and it never can be my wish to remember *unnecessarily* [*sic*] those injuries for which, however deep, I feel no resentment. I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he expressed ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage, as finding it quite insupportable, though candidly acknowledging that no effort of duty or affection has been wanting on my part. He has too painfully convinced me that all these attempts to contribute towards his happiness were wholly useless, and most unwelcome to him. I enclose this letter to my father, wishing it to receive his sanction. Ever yours most affectionately,

"A. I. Byron."

VI.

"February 4, 1816.

"I hope, my dear A., that you would on no account withhold from your brother the letter which I sent yesterday, in answer to yours written by his desire; particularly as one which I have received from himself to-day renders it still more important that he should know the contents of that addressed to you. I am, in haste and not very well, yours most affectionately,

"A. I. Byron."

VII.

"Kirkby Mallory, February 14, 1816.

"The present sufferings of all may yet be repaid in blessings. Do not despair absolutely, dearest; and leave me but enough of your interest to afford you any consolation, by partaking of that sorrow which I am most unhappy to cause thus unintentionally. You will be of my opinion hereafter, and at present your bitterest reproach would be forgiven; though Heaven knows you have considered me more than a thousand would have done—more than anything but my affection for B., one most dear to you, could deserve. I must not remember these feelings. Farewell! God bless you from the bottom of my heart! A. I. B."

These letters are conclusive of the fact that the scene recorded by Mrs. Stowe—with all its dramatic incidents—never occurred; that at the time of the separation no suspicion of Mrs. Leigh had entered Lady Byron's mind, or that, if it had, she was one of the most incomprehensible hypocrites the world ever saw. And though no one will assert that Lady Byron did not in the year 1856 tell Mrs. Stowe the story of 1816 (we must do Mrs. Stowe the justice to say that she did not invent it), we cannot do otherwise than believe that at some later time—before or after Lord Byron's death, but certainly not for many years after the separation—Lady Byron, by hallucination in her own troubled and more or less disordered mind, either became convinced that Lord Byron had really committed incest and adultery, or that some exterior agency—out of and beyond herself—was brought to bear upon her; and that she ultimately was brought to believe in the later years of her life what she could

not have believed, as an honest woman, as long as she treated Mrs. Leigh as her dear friend and companion, and one in every way worthy to associate with and confide in.

That there were such extraneous circumstances is now known, and they will be fully detailed in the history of Elizabeth Medora Leigh, whose name gives a title to this volume. In the mean while, and as further preparation for the proper comprehension of this sorrowful tale of an erring and most unfortunate young lady, it will make the narrative of Lady Byron's charge against her husband more complete if we present a short summary of the fierce literary controversy that arose immediately after Mrs. Stowe's publication, both in England and America. The bitterness of feeling that was shown on behalf of Lord Byron's memory, as well as on behalf of his lady's, showed that the lapse of forty-five years after Byron's death, and of fifty-three after his separation from his wife, had neither impaired the admiration of his countrymen for his genius, nor diminished the love of personal scandal and slander, as between man and woman, which unhappily distinguishes the idle, the frivolous, and the shallow, in all ages and countries of the world. The majority ranged themselves on Lord Byron's side, though a strong, vehement, and passionate minority took the part of Lady Byron, believed implicitly in her truth, and dwelt with marked delight on the defects of Lord Byron's character; defects that were but too glaring and too manifold, and too completely upon the surface, but that might and would have been allowed to rest in the oblivion into which they were fast falling, if it had not been for Mrs. Stowe's unauthorised publication.

Into the consideration of the faults, the vices, or the crimes of Lord Byron, whatever they may have been, we decline to enter. More than enough has been said about them. All that we or the world have to do with the matter at this time is to judge of the truth or falsehood of the narrative with which Lady Byron inspired her American friend, and of the one great charge involved in it. To this one charge we confine ourselves. Three only of the letters among all the voluminous correspondence which the discussion of the subject brought down upon the columns of the daily, weekly, and monthly press, appear to us to require detailed notice; the more especially as they were all written by the friends, relatives, or legal agents of Lady Byron herself, and not by any personal or literary friends of Lord Byron.

The first, addressed to all the daily papers of London, bore the date of the 1st of September, the date of the publication of Mrs. Stowe's article, and is signed by Messrs. Wharton and Fords, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the solicitors of the descendants and representatives of Lady Byron. These gentlemen emphatically and authoritatively repudiated and condemned Mrs. Stowe's action in the matter, and denounced the publication as not only incomplete and erroneous, but as a gross breach of trust. "Of the paper itself," says Messrs. Wharton and Fords, "we should probably have abstained from taking any public notice if it had appeared in a less respectable journal than 'Macmillan,' or if even in this periodical the authoress had been allowed to tell her story without editorial preface or comment. The editor of 'Macmillan,' however, has not only admitted Mrs. Stowe's article, but he has prefixed to it a note in which he authoritatively proclaims to the world that 'the paper on Lady Byron's life and relations to Lord Byron is the complete and authentic statement of the whole circumstances of that disastrous affair.' Nay, more—'that this paper is, in fact, Lady Byron's *own* statement of the reasons which forced her to the separation which she so long resisted." Again, the editor states that the contribution of Mrs. Stowe supplies 'evidence at once new and direct' on Lady Byron's history.

"We, as the family solicitors, beg most distinctly to state that the article is not 'a complete' or 'authentic statement' of the facts connected with the separation, that it cannot be regarded as Lady Byron's own statement, and that it does not involve any direct evidence on Lady Byron's history.

* * * * *

"Without for a moment conceding that Mrs. Stowe's narrative contains a complete account of Lady Byron's relations with her husband, we must protest against it as being professedly, first, a most gross breach of the trust and confidence stated to have been reposed in her; secondly, as inconsistent with her own recommendation to Lady Byron; and thirdly, as an ignorant violation (at least we shall in charity suppose Mrs. Stowe to be ignorant) of the express terms of Lady Byron's last will and testament.

"First, as relates to a breach of trust. Mrs. Stowe states that she was consulted in an interview, which, to use her own words, 'had almost the solemnity of a deathbed,' not as to whether she would undertake a redaction of Lady Byron's married history, but only as to the policy of publishing such a history at all. Secondly, Mrs. Stowe, on her own admission, returned to Lady Byron the brief memorandum-paper which had been entrusted to her, with the statement of her opinion that 'Lady Byron would be entirely justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death, and recommended that all facts necessary should be put in the hands of some persons to be so published.' Thirdly, Lady Byron did by her last will and testament, executed a few days only before her decease, bequeath to three persons as trustees all her manuscripts, to be by them first sealed up, and afterwards deposited in a bank in the names of such trustees,

and she directed that no one else, however nearly connected with her, should upon any plea whatever be allowed to have access to or inspect such documents, which the trustees thereof were alone to make use of as they might judge to be best for the interests of her grandchildren. Mrs. Stowe is not one of these three. Her paper is entirely gratuitous, and unauthorised. It is, as we have said, not consistent with her own counsel; it is an offence against Lady Byron's dying wishes; and the authoress has written in utter disregard of the feelings of those grandchildren, of whom she speaks in a vague, fulsome way as 'some of the best and noblest of mankind.'

* * * * *

"'Lady Byron's own statement is in the possession of those who love her memory too well to make a rash use of it; and if the world is ever to learn the true story of Lady Byron's life it will learn it from them.'"

* * * * *

The second contribution towards the clearing up of the true history which Mrs. Stowe had darkened, came from Lord Wentworth, son of Ada Byron, Countess of Lovelace, grandson of Lord and Lady Byron, and inheritor of the barony of Wentworth, to which Lady Byron herself would have succeeded had her life been spared. It was dated Boulogne, September the 7th, and addressed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—

"Sir,—In your number of September 3, you say that Mrs. Stowe is not a flagrant offender against proprieties, because my sister and I are supposed to have intended to publish correspondence relating to Lord and Lady Byron's conjugal differences.

"Now, supposing Mrs. Stowe's narrative to have been really a 'true story,' and that we had meant to reveal the whole of our grandmother's history, I do not see what defence that is to Mrs. Stowe against the charge of repeating what was told her in a 'private, confidential conversation.'

"But it is *not* true that Lady Anne Blunt and I ever intended to publish correspondence of the nature mentioned. About three years ago a manuscript in Lady Noel Byron's handwriting was found among her papers, giving an account of some circumstances connected with her marriage, and apparently intended for publication after her death; but as this seemed not quite certain, no decision as to its publication was come to. In the event of a memoir being written, this manuscript might, perhaps, be included, but hitherto it has *not* been proposed to publish any other matter about her separation.

"*This statement in Lady Byron's own handwriting does not contain any accusation of so grave a nature as that which Mrs. Stowe asserts was told her, and Mrs. Stowe's story of the separation is inconsistent with what I have seen in various letters, &c., of Lady Byron's.*

"Lady Byron says in her own statement that before being published it ought to be submitted to some person who had read through the consumed Byron memoirs, so as to secure the correction of any misstatements. I cannot see that Messrs. Wharton and Fords make no charge of material inaccuracy against Mrs. Stowe; I believe they meant to assert the inaccuracy of the whole article. *I, for one, cannot allow that Mrs. Stowe's statement is substantially correct* (according to your inference, and that of one or two other newspapers).

"I remain your obedient servant,

"Wentworth."

A second letter from Lady Byron's grandson appeared nine days afterwards, addressed to the editor of the *Daily News*, in reply to some comments which had been made by that journal, but need not be republished here, as it adds nothing to his Lordship's previous and very decisive communication.

The third and last of this series of communications to the press, to which it is necessary for the purpose of these pages to refer, were two letters addressed to the editor of the *Times* by Lord Lindsay, one on the 3d and the other on the 14th of September. The first was particularly remarkable, as stating the experience of Lady Anne Barnard, an old and intimate friend of Lady Byron, a literary lady, and a poetess of no mean mark, who, for the sake of literature, might possibly have sympathised with Lord Byron—if it were possible to do so—but who, on the contrary, thought very badly of Lord Byron, and spoke her mind unreservedly of his strange behaviour to his wife, but never dreamed of or imagined as possible such a charge as that made by Mrs. Stowe, and which, if Lady Byron had herself made it at the time alleged by her to Mrs. Stowe, could not have failed to come to Lady Anne's knowledge. The letter was as follows:—

"Sir,—I have waited in expectation of a categorical denial of the horrible charge brought by Mrs. Beecher Stowe against Lord Byron and his sister, on the alleged authority of the late Lady Byron. Such denial has been only indirectly given by the letter of Messrs. Wharton and Fords, in your impression of yesterday. That letter is sufficient to prove that Lady Byron never contemplnted the use made of her name, and that her descendants and representatives disclaim any countenance of Mrs. B. Stowe's article; but it does not specifically meet Mrs. Stowe's allegation that Lady Byron, in conversing with her thirteen years ago, affirmed the charge now before us. It remains open, therefore, to a scandal-loving world to credit the calumny through the advantage of this flaw, involuntarily, I believe, in the answer produced against it. My object in addressing you is to supply that defi-

ciency by proving that what is now stated on Lady Byron's supposed authority is at variance in all respects with what she stated immediately after the separation, when everything was fresh in her memory in relation to the time during which, according to Mrs. B. Stowe, she believed that Byron and his sister were living together in guilt. I publish this evidence with reluctance, but in obedience to that higher obligation of justice to the voiceless and defenceless dead which bids me break through a reserve that otherwise I should have held sacred. The Lady Byron of 1818 would, I am certain, have sanctioned my doing so had she foreseen the present unparalleled occasion, and the bar that the conditions of her will present (as I infer from Messrs. Wharton and Fords' letter) against any fuller communication. Calumnies such as the present sink deep and with rapidity into the public mind, and are not easily eradicated. The fame of one of our greatest poets, and that of the kindest, and truest, and most constant friend that Byron ever had, is at stake; and it will not do to wait for revelations from the fountain-head which are not promised, and possibly may never reach us.

"The late Lady Anne Barnard, who died in 1825, a contemporary and friend of Burke, Windham, Dundas, and a host of the wise and good of that generation, and remembered in letters as the authoress of 'Auld Robin Gray,' had known the late Lady Byron from infancy, and took a warm interest in her, holding Lord Byron in corresponding repugnance, not to say prejudice, in consequence of what she believed to be his harsh and cruel treatment of her young friend. I transcribe the following passages, and a letter from Lady Byron herself (written in 1818) from *ricordi*, or private family memoirs, in Lady Anne's autograph now before me. I include the letter because, although treating only in general terms of the matter and causes of the separation, it affords collateral evidence bearing strictly upon the point of the credibility of the charge now in question:—

"'The separation of Lord and Lady Byron astonished the world, which believed him a reformed man as to his habits, and a becalmed man as to his remorses. He had written nothing that appeared after his marriage till the famous "Fare Thee Well," which had the power of compelling those to pity the writer who were not well aware that he was not the unhappy person he affected to be. Lady Byron's misery was whispered soon after her marriage, and his illusage; but no word transpired, no sign escaped from her. She gave birth shortly to a daughter; and when she went as soon as she was recovered on a visit to her father's, taking her little Ada with her, no one knew that it was to return to her lord no more. At that period a severe fit of illness had confined me to bed for two months. I heard of Lady Byron's distress; of the pains he took to give a harsh impression of her character to the world. I wrote to her, and entreated her to come and let me see and hear her, if she conceived my sympathy or counsel could be any comfort to her. She came—but what a tale was unfolded by this interesting young creature, who had so fondly hoped to have made a young man of genius and romance (as she supposed) happy! They had not been an hour in the carriage which conveyed them from the church when, breaking into a malignant sneer: "Oh! what a dupe you have been to your imagination. How is it possible a woman of your sense could form the wild hope of reforming *me?* Many are the tears you will have to shed ere that plan is accomplished. It is enough for me that you are my wife for me to hate you; if you were the wife of any other man I own you might have charms," etc. I, who listened, was astonished. "How could you go on after this," said I, "my dear? Why did you not return to your father's?" "Because I had not a conception he was in earnest; because I reckoned it a bad jest, and told him so,—that my opinions of him were very different from his of himself, otherwise he would not find me by his side. He laughed it over when he saw me appear hurt, and I forgot what had passed till forced to remember it. I believe he was pleased with me, too, for a little while. I suppose it had escaped his memory that I was his wife." But she described the happiness they enjoyed to have been unequal and perturbed. Her situation in a short time might have entitled her to some tenderness, but she made no claim on him for any. He sometimes reproached her for the motives that had induced her to marry him—all was "vanity, the vanity of Miss Milbanke carrying the point of reforming Lord Byron! He always knew *her* inducements; her pride shut her eyes to *his; he* wished to build up his character and his fortunes; both were somewhat deranged; she had a high name, and would have a fortune worth his attention,—let her look to that for *his* motives!" "O Byron, Byron," she said, "how you desolate me!" He would then accuse himself of being mad, and throw himself on the ground in a frenzy, which she believed was affected to conceal the coldness and malignity of his heart—an affectation which at that time never failed to meet with the tenderest commiseration. I could find by some implications, not followed up by me, lest she might have condemned herself afterwards for her involuntary disclosures, that he soon attempted to corrupt her principles, both with respect to her own conduct and her latitude for his. She saw the precipice on which she stood, and kept his sister with her as much as possible. He returned in the evenings from the haunts of vice, where he made her understand he had been, with manners so profligate! "Oh, the wretch!" said I;

"and had he no moments of remorse?" "Sometimes he appeared to have them. One night, coming home from one of his lawless parties, he saw me so indignantly collected, and bearing all with such a determined calmness, that a rush of remorse seemed to come over him; he called himself a monster, though his sister was present, and threw himself in agony at my feet. I could not—no—I could not forgive him such injuries. He had lost me for ever!" Astonished at the return of virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over his face, and I said, "Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it more!" He started up, and, folding his arms while he looked at me, burst into laughter. "What do you mean?" said I. "Only a philosophical experiment, that's all," said he. "I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions." I need not say more of this prince of duplicity, except that varied were his methods of rendering her wretched, even to the last. When her lovely little child was born, and it was laid beside its mother on the bed, and he was informed "he might see his daughter," after gazing at it with an exulting smile, this was the ejaculation that broke from him—"O! what an implement of torture have I acquired in you!" Such he rendered it by his eyes and manner, keeping her in a perpetual alarm for its safety when in his presence. All this reads madder than I believe he was; but she had not then made up her mind to disbelieve his pretended insanity, and conceived it best to intrust her secret with the excellent Dr. Baillie, telling him all that seemed to regard the state of her husband's mind, and letting his advice regulate her conduct. Baillie doubted of his derangement, but, as he did not reckon his own opinion infallible, he wished her to take precautions as if her husband was so. He recommended her going to the country, but to give him no suspicions of her intentions of remaining there, and for a short time to show no coldness in her letters till she could better ascertain his state. She went—regretting, as she told me, to wear any semblance but the truth. A short time disclosed the story to the world. He acted the part of a man driven to despair by her inflexible resentment, and by the arts of a governess (once a servant in the family), who hated him. "I will give you," proceeds Lady Anne, "a few paragraphs transcribed from one of Lady Byron's own letters to me. It is sorrowful to think that in a very little time this young and amiable creature, wise, patient, and feeling, will have her character mistaken by every one who reads Byron's works. To rescue her from this I preserved her letters, and when she afterwards expressed a fear that anything of her writing should ever fall into hands to injure him (I suppose she meant by publication), I safely assured her that it never should. But here this letter shall be placed, a sacred record in her favour unknown to herself:—

"'"I am a very incompetent judge of the impression which the last canto of "Childe Harold" may produce on the minds of indifferent readers. It contains the usual trace of a conscience restlessly awake, though his object has been too long to aggravate its burden, as if it could thus be oppressed into eternal stupor. I will hope, as you do, that it survives for his ultimate good. It was the acuteness of his remorse, impenitent in its character, which so long seemed to demand from my compassion to spare every semblance of reproach, every look of grief, which might have said to his conscience, "You have made me wretched." I am decidedly of opinion that he *is* responsible. He has wished to be thought partially deranged, or on the brink of it, to perplex observers, and prevent them from tracing effects to their real causes through all the intricacies of his conduct. I was, as I told you, at one time the dupe of his acted insanity, and clung to the former delusions in regard to the motives that concerned me personally till the whole system was laid bare. He is the absolute monarch of words, and uses them, as Bonaparte did lives, for conquest, without more regard to their intrinsic value, considering them only as ciphers, which must derive all their import from the situation in which he places them and the ends to which he adapts them with such consummate skill. Why, then, you will say, does he not employ them to give a better colour to his own character? Because he is too good an actor to over-act, or to assume a moral garb which it would be easy to strip off. In regard to his poetry, egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified: but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene or time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures in a system impenetrable except to a very few, and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions. Nothing has contributed more to the misunderstanding of his real character than the lonely grandeur in which he shrouds it, and his affectation of being above mankind, when he exists almost in their voice. The romance of his sentiments is another feature of this mask of state. I know no one more habitually destitute of that enthusiasm he so beautifully expresses, and to which he can work up his fancy chiefly by contagion. I had heard he was the best of brothers, the most generous of friends; and I thought such feelings only required to be warmed and cherished into more diffusive benevolence. Though these opinions are eradicated, and could never return but with the decay of my memory, you will not wonder if there are still moments when the association of feelings which arose from them soften and sadden my thoughts.

But I have not thanked you, dearest Lady Anne, for your kindness in regard to a principal object —that of rectifying false impressions. I trust you understand my wishes, which never were to injure Lord Byron in any way; for, though he would not suffer me to remain his wife, he cannot prevent me from continuing his friend; and it was from considering myself as such that I silenced the accusations by which my own conduct might have been more fully justified. It is not necessary to speak ill of his heart in general; it is sufficient that to me it was hard and impenetrable—that my own must have been broken before his could have been touched. I would rather represent this as *my* misfortune than as *his* guilt; but, surely, that misfortune is not to be made my crime! Such are my feelings: you will judge how to act. His allusions to me in "Childe Harold" are cruel and cold, but with such a semblance as to make *me* appear so, and to attract all sympathy to himself. It is said in this poem that hatred of him will be taught as a lesson to his child. I might appeal to all who have ever heard me speak of him, and still more to my own heart, to witness that there has been no moment when I have remembered injury otherwise than affectionately and sorrowfully. It is not my duty to give way to hopeless and wholly unrequited affection; but so long as I live, my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly. I do not seek the sympathy of the world, but I wish to be known by those whose opinion is valuable and whose kindness is dear to me. Among such, my dear Lady Anne, you will ever be remembered by your truly affectionate A. Byron."'"

"It is the province of your readers," continues Lord Lindsay, "and of the world at large, to judge between the two testimonies now before them—Lady Byron's in 1816 and 1818, and that put forward in 1869 by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, as communicated by Lady Byron thirteen years ago. In the face of the evidence now given, positive, negative, and circumstantial, there can be but two alternatives in the case,—either Mrs. Beecher Stowe must have entirely misunderstood Lady Byron, and been thus led into error and misstatement, or we must conclude that, under the pressure of a lifelong and secret sorrow, Lady Byron's mind had become clouded with an hallucination in respect of the particular point in question.

"The reader will admire the noble but severe character displayed in Lady Byron's letter; but those who keep in view what her first impressions were, as above recorded, may probably place a more lenient interpretation than hers upon some of the incidents alleged to Byron's discredit. I shall conclude with some remarks upon his character, written shortly after his death by a wise, virtuous, and charitable judge, the late Sir Walter Scott, likewise in a letter to Lady Anne Barnard:—

"'Fletcher's account of poor Byron is extremely interesting. I had always a strong attachment to that unfortunate though most richly gifted man, because I thought I saw that his virtues (and he had many) were his own, and his eccentricities the result of an irritable temperament, which sometimes approached nearly to mental disease. Those who are gifted with strong nerves, a regular temper, and habitual self-command, are not perhaps aware how much of what they may think virtue they owe to constitution; and such are but too severe judges of men like Byron, whose mind, like a day of alternate storm and sunshine, is all dark shades and stray gleams of light, instead of the twilight grey which illuminates happier though less distinguished mortals. I always thought that when a moral proposition was placed plainly before Lord Byron, his mind yielded a pleased and willing assent to it; but if there was any side-view given, in the way of raillery or otherwise, he was willing enough to evade conviction. . . . It augurs ill for the cause of Greece that this master-spirit should have been withdrawn from their assistance just as he was obtaining a complete ascendency over their counsels. I have seen several letters from the Ionian Islands, all of which unite in speaking in the highest praise of the wisdom and temperance of his counsels, and the ascendency he was obtaining over the turbulent and ferocious chiefs of the insurgents. I have some verses written by him on his last birthday; they breathe a spirit of affection toward his wife, and a desire of dying in battle, which seems like an anticipation of his approaching fate.'

"I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

"Lindsay.

"Dunecht, September 3."

Lord Lindsay's second letter to the *Times* added nothing to the facts in the first, but drew a series of incontrovertible deductions from the statements therein contained, as compared with the statements of Mrs. Stowe, all of them tending to confirm the view we have already taken in the preceding pages, and which all impartial and competent persons, who have devoted adequate attention to the subject, have taken—namely, that whatever were the charges brought secretly or overtly against Lord Byron, prior to and at the time of the separation, the charge of incest was not seriously entertained, if heard of, by anybody. He was accused, if not by his wife, by the idle scandalmongers who drew their own conclusions from her inexplicable silence, of "brutality," "drunkenness," "madness," "bigamy," "murder," and, as Lord Byron himself mockingly said, "of every crime that could be, and of many that could not be committed." But though

it is evident from all contemporary evidence, and from Lady Byron's own letters to Mrs. Leigh, that the charge of incest was not made in 1816—and from Lady Byron's letter to her friend Lady Anne Barnard, in 1818, that it was not made two years afterwards—it is equally evident that the story as told by Mrs. Stowe is untrue as regards its date, and that the charge was first made at a much later time. When was that time? Who made it? And did Lady Byron believe it, and lend it countenance? These inquiries will all find their answer in the history and autobiography of Elizabeth Medora Leigh, which will be duly set forth in the next chapter.

PART II.

MEDORA LEIGH; A HISTORY AND AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Serenely purest of her sex that live,
But wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive;
Too shock'd at faults her soul can never know,
She deems that all could be like her below:
Foe to all vice, yet hardly Virtue's friend,
For Virtue pardons those she would amend.

Lord Byron. "*A Sketch.*"

PART II.

MEDORA LEIGH.

In the summer of 1843, twenty-seven years after the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, and nineteen years after the death of Lord Byron at Missolonghi, there arrived in London from Paris and the South of France, where she had resided for some time previously, a young lady, with a pretty little daughter, nine or ten years old. The lady represented herself as the fourth child of the Hon. Augusta Leigh, the sister of Lord Byron. She was born, she said, in 1815, and was consequently in her twenty-eighth year. She was good-looking rather than eminently handsome, had dark eyes and hair, and a dark complexion, and was altogether a very lively and agreeable person. She was not, however, in strong health; and, worst of all to her at the moment, she was without the means of subsistence for herself and daughter, the little girl Marie, to whom she was passionately attached, and whom she had brought with her from Hyères. She had come to England to urge a claim which she had, or fancied she had, upon the generosity and kind feeling of Lady Byron; and her expenses from Paris to London had been defrayed by Captain De B——, a gallant veteran of the British army, who had served through the Peninsular war in the 71st Regiment, and had received several severe wounds at the battle of Waterloo, for which he enjoyed a pension of £100 per annum. This officer, who had long been resident in the South of France, had found Miss Leigh in Paris in a state of utter destitution, had heard her sad story, had relieved her to the extent his limited means allowed, and had defrayed the charges of her return to England, in order that she might plead her cause in person with her wealthy and powerful relatives, and especially with Lady Byron, who had long treated her with motherly affection, and paid for her maintenance, but who had suddenly withdrawn her favour, and left her and her child to perish of neglect and hunger. Captain De B—— (the officer just mentioned), in the course of a business visit to his London correspondents, incidentally mentioned, as a reason for requiring some more money than usual, the circumstances of his extra expenditure for Miss Leigh, whose parentage he stated, alleging her to be the daughter of Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh. This strange statement, if only as an apparent solution of the hitherto undivulged cause of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, naturally excited great curiosity and interest in those who heard it, particularly in one of the partners, who had spent some days in Lord Byron's company in one of the Greek islands; and he determined to inquire into the truth of it. Miss Leigh proved to his entire satisfaction, by documentary evidence in her possession, that she was indeed the daughter of the Hon. Augusta Leigh; detailed to him, and afterwards gave him in writing, the whole history of her unhappy life; and so deeply impressed him in her favour, that he took measures, without divulging their object, to obtain confidential access to some of the high personages interested in her case—in order, if possible, that she might be reinstated in the high position which she had formerly held in Lady Byron's affections, and which she had strangely forfeited, without, as she knew, any fault of her own. She alleged (as it satisfactorily appears from other and corroboratory evidence, with perfect truth) that her mother, Mrs. Leigh, and her aunt, Lady Byron, had given her what is called in legal parlance a "Deed of Appointment," by which the sum of £3000 was to become payable to her after the death of these ladies. She was in such dire distress, on the very brink of starvation, dependent wholly upon the pitying charity of an unwealthy officer, on whom she had no claim beyond that of common humanity, that she desired to sell her reversionary interest for whatever sum, however moderate, it might realise in the market. She also claimed a box of valuable family papers and letters which she had entrusted to Lady Byron's custody, but which was said to have been stolen from Lady Byron's house in Moore Place, by a French waiting-woman and her husband, a valet or courier, who had been employed by Lady Byron, in the days when she and Miss Leigh were friends, to act as her servants in the South of France. This man being, as was believed, in possession of the box and documents, attempted to extort money from Lady Byron, and from the Earl and Countess of Lovelace, by threats of publishing the particulars of Miss Leigh's birth and parentage, which he thought would be painful to all the noble families interested in and related to the Hon. Mrs. Leigh and her husband. The most active of the two partners in the firm to whom Miss Leigh was introduced by their client —the most active, at least, as far as this poor lady's case was concerned—was a gentleman whom, for the purposes of this narrative, we shall designate by the initial letter of his name as Mr. S——.

The documents and papers on which this narrative is founded came from his hands, and are published by his consent and authority. The originals are in the possession of the publisher* of this volume, and will be shown to any one who has any legal pretence to inspect them.

Before proceeding further with Miss Leigh's previous history and career, or with a narrative of the efforts that were made in 1843, by herself and her friends, to procure for her a return of the maternal kindness of Lady Byron, a few words in relation to the pedigree and genealogy of the Byron family will not only be in place, but will materially conduce to the clear comprehension of Miss Leigh's history, and of the claims she preferred upon certain noble persons with whom she was connected through her mother.

The grandfather of Lord Byron was Admiral Byron, celebrated by his grandson, with a pardonable pride, as a great navigator, or circumnavigator of the globe, at a time when such circumnavigation was so rare as to be remarkable. In the year 1748, the Admiral married a Miss Trevanion, of Carhays, in Cornwall. His son, Captain Byron, born in 1756, and the father of the poet, was twice married—first to Lady Amelia D'Arcy, only daughter and heiress of Robert, last Earl of Holdernesse. The earldom did not descend to heirs female, but the barony of Conyers did; and Baroness Conyers married for the first time Francis Marquis of Carmarthen, and afterwards the fifth Duke of Leeds. She had two children by this nobleman, one of whom succeeded to his father's dukedom and his mother's barony. She was divorced from and by her husband in May 1779. Captain Byron, the predisposing cause of the divorce, immediately afterwards married Lady Conyers, who dropped, as a matter of course, the title of Marchioness of Carmarthen. By her, who died in 1781, he had two daughters—one who died an infant, and the other, Augusta, who married her cousin, Colonel Leigh, of the 10th Dragoon Guards. Four years after the death of Lady Conyers, Captain Byron married Miss Gordon, of Gight, a Scottish lady, by whom he had a son, the afterwards famous poet, George Gordon, Lord Byron. The Hon. Augusta Byron, afterwards by marriage the Hon. Augusta Leigh, was thus the half-sister of Lord Byron—his father's but not his mother's child. It follows, from this genealogical statement, that there was a connection between the noble families of Leeds, Conyers, and Byron, which will account for some of the names introduced into the autobiography of Miss Leigh.

Mr. S—— (and the reader, for reasons satisfactory to that gentleman and to the Editor, must be pleased to accept the initial under which he chooses to screen himself from a publicity which at his age would be unwelcome) was no sooner persuaded that the case of Medora Leigh was genuine, than he sought an introduction to and an interview with Dr. Lushington, who was then, as he had been since 1816, in Lady Byron's fullest confidence. The object of the interview was not communicated in the letter of introduction; and Mr. S—— had to state it, together with his grounds of intercession, in direct terms to the eminent civilian, who on his part received the statement as an understood fact. The first interview led to no other result than the following note:—

"Dr. Lushington presents his compliments to Mr. S——, and is sorry to say that he has no communication to make from Lady Noel Byron. Dr. Lushington has written twice to Lady Byron since he saw Mr. S——, but, unfortunately, his first letter has not reached her, in consequence of her moving from place to place.

"Great George Street, July —"
(day of the month omitted).

Between the day when this note was written and the 21st of the same month, Dr. Lushington received two letters from Lady Byron in reply to those which he had addressed to her. He thereupon requested a second interview with Mr. S——, in order to read those letters to him. Mr. S—— attended to the summons, and, as in the first instance, noted down the whole conversation within half an hour after its occurrence, and while every word, phrase, point, and question were still fresh in his memory.

"MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH DR. LUSHINGTON, THIS 21ST OF JULY, 1843, AT 4 O'CLOCK.

"Dr. Lushington read a letter from Lady Noel Byron, stating 'that she had received his letters, but was not to be moved, by the arguments used in behalf of Miss Leigh, from her determination to have no further intercourse with her. That Mr. S—— was very imperfectly informed as to Miss Leigh's conduct towards her, and she (Lady Byron) did not mean to make it more known. She deeply commiserated Miss Leigh, but she could not consent to renew communication with her.'

"I said that that letter seemed to shut the door upon all hope of reconciliation, whatever Miss Leigh might do in the way of submission; and that as to my being imperfectly informed of her conduct, I might be so, but it must be something done between Lady Byron's last letter to her in Paris and Dr. King's offer of £300 a year, and the present time. That down to Miss Leigh's leaving Hyères, nothing could be more affectionate, more motherly and considerate, than Lady Byron's letters. The going to Paris had given offence, but it was justified; and though the justification was not admitted, intercourse was

* Richard Bentley, London.

reopened by letter, and by messages and offers through Dr. King. What had been done since, except the receiving of Mrs. Leigh's Deed of Appointment and the letter of Miss Leigh to Lord Chichester, I did not know; but I had heard of nothing, and I did not think there was any thing unpardonably offensive in these.

"Dr. Lushington said he knew no more than I did, and had not heard of the affair at all, till within the last six weeks or two months; that Lady Byron was not likely to be moved by any further representations on his part, as he had written two long letters to her, filling two sheets of paper, with a full recapitulation of everything I had urged at our former conversation, and the answer (which showed that he had so done) was what he had read.

"I said that the case became one of simple starvation for Miss Leigh and her child; that Captain De B—— was not only not able to continue to pay for her living, but he must return to France immediately, and the girl would be utterly destitute. I urged everything that I could think of to induce Dr. Lushington to view the matter as of infinite importance to Lady Byron's and to Lady Lovelace's peace of mind; that no idea of threat, or terror, or extortion had ever entered the heads of Miss Leigh's present advisers; that propriety was to be considered, publicity to be guarded against in every way,—but what was the girl to do for bread?

"Dr. Lushington gave no answer to any of my remarks in the way of appeal to Lady Byron's feelings, or to the consequences of driving Miss Leigh to desperation, or to some communication with persons who, without doing her ultimate good, might do infinite harm to every member of the Byron family; but he said that if I would take his advice, I should go to Sir George Stephen, and should recommend Miss Leigh to see him and to conduct herself well to him. That there was a chance that *he* might effect something favourable for her, but he had no authority for saying this, and guarded me against being led to hope anything from it.

"I said that I could not conceive, that after the failure of his attempts to conciliate Lady Byron, there could be any hope of Sir George Stephen's succeeding, and I repudiated the thought of trying him.

"Dr. Lushington: 'There may be others of the family to whom he has access,—I cannot say more; I believe that is the only chance at all for Miss Leigh. I am not at liberty to say more—you understand me?'

"I said I should consult Miss Leigh and act according to her instructions, but upon the strength of what he said, I should recommend the adoption of his advice, although I doubted Miss Leigh's concurrence; and at all events, if I succeeded in procuring means of subsistence from any other source than Lady Byron, it was clear that there was an end of all obligation and all circumspection as regarded her or her daughter. I mentioned that the French valet was in London, and had said that he should seek an opportunity of insulting or assaulting Lord Lovelace, that he might be taken to Bow Street for the purpose of publishing Miss Leigh's history through the police reports.

"Dr. Lushington said that the valet had brought an action against Lady Byron, and on my asking what for, he answered that he supposed it was of a general nature for money, and that he most assuredly should advise Lady Byron to defend it and to keep him at arm's length.

"I pointed out to Dr. Lushington, as I had formerly done, that it was this man and his wife who had caused all the mischief, and that it was unfair not to consider Miss Leigh's youth and ignorance of the world.

"Dr. Lushington evaded all answer to these allusions, but repeated his advice as to Sir George Stephen. I said that I saw no resource but a sale of the Deed of Appointment for present purposes; and future events might be as they may; and that I was most deeply grieved and disappointed at the upshot of my endeavours. I said that the wife of the valet had made application to Lady Byron, in behalf of Miss Leigh, for a box of important documents and papers belonging to her, of which Lady Byron had the custody; but she (Lady Byron) refused to give it up except to Miss Leigh herself; that the valet's wife had given back the key to Miss Leigh.

"Dr. Lushington said that the box had disappeared from Moore House from the moment that the valet's wife had been in it; that they had searched over and over again for it. Lady Byron wanted to advertise the loss, but he stopped it as useless and unadvisable.

"We parted on the understanding of my communicating to Miss Leigh, and acting as should be concerted; but all hope of further communication with Lady Byron, either at an interview or by writing, was given up.

"The above is written within half an hour after the conversation took place. T. S."

Acting, though somewhat reluctantly, upon the advice given by Dr. Lushington in this interview, Mr. S—— had several interviews and conferences with Sir George Stephen, who at that time was an eminent attorney in the city of London. He acted as the legal adviser of Lady Byron, and was furthermore known in the world of letters as the author of an amusing volume, "The Adventures of a Gentleman in search of a Horse, by Caveat Emptor." Sir George, after ample time for deliberation, set forth his views on the whole subject of Miss Leigh's distresses, her claims upon the kindheartedness of Lady Byron, and the methods by which, and by which only, she could,

in his opinion, be restored to the favour she had forfeited, in the following letter:—

"17, King's Arms Yard, Coleman Street,
"August 9, 1843.

"Sir,—I have not succeeded in obtaining the letters of Miss Leigh. If I had, I should have written to you before.

"I retain the same disposition to assist her, by mediation with her friends, and shall feel truly rejoiced to be the means of extricating her from her present false and painful position; but I cannot undertake the office on any other terms than those that I proposed to you in the interview with which you favoured me, namely:

"Her surrender of the Deed of Appointment, as a sacred provision, to trustees—for her child.

"Her written expression of her sincere contrition for her conduct to Lady Byron.

"Her return to seclusion in France.

"On these terms I will exert myself to the utmost, to obtain for her from her friends a permanent and comfortable domicile in France, and I am convinced that I shall succeed. But on any other terms I cannot feel it right again to interpose. Heaven forbid that I should stipulate for any self-degrading conditions! I am so far from meaning it, that if there is any modification of my terms that you or she can suggest, consistent with the substance of them, I will gladly attend to the suggestion. My only object is to effect an arrangement that may conduce to the peace and comfort of all parties, in the most distressing case that ever fell within my knowledge. I feel assured that I have influence enough to accomplish it with one party, if I can bring the other to a full conviction of her duty, no less than her interest.

"But still I cannot, even in self-respect, undertake the office of mediator on any terms but such as I feel are honestly due to Lady Byron. I *personally* know the motive as well as the extent of the kindness that she has shown to Miss Leigh, and there are very few, certainly not more than three, who know it as well. She has deserved all that is grateful and all that is respectful at Miss Leigh's hands; and therefore, till her feelings are consulted and satisfied, so far as under the present unfortunate circumstances they can be, I will never approach her, or any of her family, as an intercessor for further assistance. Indeed, from her, personally, I can expect nothing, unless it is to co-operate with others in doing what actual necessity seems to require; but I am confident that none of the high circle to whom my appeal must be made, if made at all, will move in the matter except full atonement is first made to her justly wounded feelings.

"I remain, Sir,
"Yours very obediently,
"George Stephen.

"T. S——, Esq."

In addition to the conversation of Mr. S—— with Sir George Stephen, in reference to Miss Leigh's distress to which this letter is a formal reply, an intimation was thrown out, in subsequent interviews between the parties, that the wealthy families with whom Miss Leigh was so closely related, could not, as a matter of delicacy and honour, allow a by no means wealthy stranger, like Captain De B——, to remain without reimbursement of the small sums — small in themselves, though comparatively large to a gentleman in his humble circumstances—which he had expended on her behalf, to secure her from the positive deprivation of food, and the commonest necessaries of life; or perhaps, if he had not taken her so generously in hand, from the workhouse or the streets. On the 7th of July, Mr. S—— wrote to Lord Lovelace, with whom he had some previous acquaintance, on this subject. Two days afterwards, his lordship replied, in a note dated from Ockham Park, that, "as Captain De B—— had had the advantage of one or two personal interviews with Lady Byron's solicitor, in consequence of his (Captain De B——'s) application to her ladyship, and as no arrangement had resulted therefrom, he (Lord Lovelace) must decline to enter into any communication with Mr. S—— upon the subject; the more so as Captain De B——'s intervention in the matter was wholly uninitiated by Lady Noel Byron, and by himself (Lord Lovelace)."

Mr. S——, still earnest in the cause, both of Captain De B—— and of the unfortunate Miss Leigh, endeavoured, without altogether losing heart and hope, to work yet a little further upon the kindly feelings of Sir George Stephen—whose letter showed a disposition, stronger perhaps in the man than in the lawyer, to assist an unfortunate woman—so as to bring his great and undoubted influence to bear upon his noble clients. Nothing, however, came of these attempts and these interviews, for the reason that both Lady Byron and Miss Leigh were equally firm—if obstinate be not the better word—on the subject of the "Deed of Appointment." Lady Byron refused to be reconciled to Miss Leigh, or to have anything to do with her, unless that document were surrendered; and Miss Leigh refused, point-blank, to surrender it on any conditions whatever. Finally on the 4th of September, 1843, after an interval of nearly four weeks spent in these fruitless negotiations, Mr. S—— wrote to Sir George Stephen, in reply to that gentleman's letter of the 9th of August. In this document he deplored the unsatisfactory result of the negotiations, and expressed both his regret and surprise, that Lady Byron should not only have hardened her heart against one whom she had formerly treated as if she had been her own child, but that her family and connections, and the husband of her daughter Ada, who had been Miss Leigh's playmate in childhood, should, on a

punctilio of offended dignity, allow Captain De B——'s Christian benevolence to be a drain upon a pocket that was far less capacious than his human sympathy. It was nearly a month after the receipt of Sir George Stephen's communication, during which time Miss Leigh had repeatedly expressed her willingness to do anything that was required of her by Lady Byron, with the sole exception of delivering up her mother's Deed of Appointment, that Mr. S—— wrote the following letter to Lady Byron's solicitor [Sir George Stephen]:—

"September 4, 1843.

"Sir,—I have so fully communicated to you in conversation the sentiments of Miss Leigh upon the conditions which you think would through your mediation again procure her the means of existence from Lady Byron, that it is now perhaps superfluous to acknowledge formally the receipt of your letter of the 9th August. But as, to my deep regret, and I will ever say to my utter astonishment, the spirit of all that I have heard on the part of Lady Byron has been so different from what I think there was reason to expect, I deem it advisable to state in writing that Miss Leigh has always been willing, with or without countervailing advantage to herself, to make any acknowledgments, and to express any contrition, that might be required by Lady Byron, and to come under any reasonable obligation as to her future mode of life;—so that, although there was nothing in your offers which could be regarded as a definite undertaking that certain results would follow compliance with certain terms, two of your three conditions were unhesitatingly accepted.

"With regard to the third, Miss Leigh is most desirous of preserving entire for herself and her child the provision in her mother's Deed of Appointment; but she objects to put it irrevocably under the control of other persons, without some equally irrevocable obligation for her support adequate to the surrender which she would thereby make.

"It is, therefore, solely upon this her objection, that I must presume Lady Byron continues in her determination to abandon her to want and misery, insisting upon the surrender of the Deed as a test of the sincerity of Miss Leigh's repentance.

"Having due regard to the relative positions of the parties, and in particular to Lady Byron's past benevolence and maternal interest in this unfortunate young lady, it is difficult to say that, as far as Lady Byron's personal feelings are in question, this is an unreasonable requisition, nor, as Miss Leigh showed by having unasked left the Deed in Lady Byron's custody, would she have hesitated to have left it again with her, had she been restored to her favor;—but, on the other hand, taking Miss Leigh's personal feelings, her *present* position, and her wrongs into consideration, it surely is not surprising that she should object to part with the only property in the world that she can call her own, for no return which change of opinion or of circumstances may not wrest from her as suddenly and unexpectedly as in the recent instance of Lady Byron's abandonment.

"It is not for me to express any opinion on the course adopted by the principal parties in this very painful and singular case. I have the misfortune to differ widely from you as to the degree of culpability attributable to the offending party, and though assured by you of the existence of many causes of offence, I have failed in obtaining a specification of any beyond that for which I must ever think there was much extenuation, while the imparting of the *power* of offending in the particular way alluded to, would assuredly be viewed by third parties as of very questionable propriety.

"But with regard to the branch of the subject which brought me into connection with it, namely, the intervention of Captain De B—— to save Miss Leigh and her child from actual want, I may be permitted to express my amazement—and I cannot imagine any discreet and reasonable person not participating in it—that by the cold denial of his claim for reimbursement Lady Byron and her family should have *necessitated* the disclosure which Captain De B—— felt himself bound to make to his agents, of the circumstances under which he was placed by such an unlooked-for result of his readiness to assist an English lady in distress. That this denial has been the cause of whatever Lady Byron and her family may think themselves aggrieved by since our intervention, there is not, and there cannot be, the shadow of a doubt. From an expression in Lord Lovelace's letter to me, it might be inferred that his lordship looks upon Captain De B——'s intervention as impertinent and officious, and as if some permission should have been asked before money was paid for Miss Leigh. I cannot understand this idea. Captain De B—— accidentally met a lady whom he had known as a neighbour, without present means of subsistence, in Paris, but who, from letters and obligations to a large pecuniary amount, he saw was connected with one of the most distinguished ladies in England. He refused to enquire further into her circumstances, her relationship, or her past history, but, relying on the name and character of Lady Byron, he paid, and has continued to pay, for the subsistence of one whom he found her ladyship had been treating as 'her other child.' For this he received an enquiring visit from a solicitor, and an impression was taken of his motives and conduct, of which I am much mistaken if Lady Byron and her family have not already discovered the erroneousness, and possibly may already feel regret for having entertained.

"I conclude this too long letter by asserting emphatically that the earnest desire of Captain De B—— and his friends was to prevent the infliction of a single painful sensation on Lady Byron's mind, either from the effects of present revelations, or of future consequences of them. Deeply deploring our utter failure in this object,

"I have the honor to be, &c.

"T. S."

We have now arrived at that stage in the narrative, when it becomes necessary to let Medora Leigh speak for herself, and unfold, in her own style and language, what were the peculiar claims she had upon the affection and generosity of Lady Byron, other than that she was in deep poverty and affliction; and that she was really and truly her niece by marriage, and the daughter of Lord Byron's sister. She wrote out and placed in the hands of Mr. S——, that he might know—however painful and discreditable to herself they might be—*all* the circumstances of her life from her fifteenth year, when all her errors and all her sorrows commenced, in the shape of an autobiographical memoir. This memoir is the saddest story of a young, erring, deceived, and repentant girl, that perhaps was ever laid bare to the scrutiny of a harsh and unforgiving world. Like the last mournful confession of a culprit at the point of death, and almost at the bar of eternity, it concealed nothing, either as affected herself or others; opened her heart, as if it were a cabinet into which all the world might peer and examine, either for monstrosities or curiosities; and brought the most fearful accusations against the mother who bore her, and her elder sister, whom she more particularly charged with being the origin of all her calamities and degradations. After long doubt and hesitation—the maturest consideration, and consultation with others to whom the circumstances are known, and who have perused Miss Leigh's manuscripts—the editor of this volume decided to reproduce it in its entirety, on account of the light which it throws upon the one great matter of present controversy—the charge brought by Lady Byron and Mrs. Stowe against Lord Byron's memory—the only matter in which it can really interest the public of this or any other day. Not to create what is called a sensation—not to pander to scoundrel curiosity—not to feed the greedy maw of scandal, that loves to prey upon the reputation of the great, the exalted, and the gifted; but in the interest of truth, irrespective of all or any whom the truth may touch, and with the fullest reliance that no one truth can ever contradict or be antagonistic to any other truth, the story of the erring and unhappy child of Lord Byron's sister will now be told, as it affects Mrs. Leigh, Lady Noel Byron, and the minor characters that revolve around these two. Lord Byron himself she never saw; and if Lord Byron ever saw her—which is nowhere recorded by Lord Byron, or others, that we can discover—it must have been as an infant in the cradle; for she was born in 1815, and in 1816 Lord Byron quitted England, never again to return. He never again saw either his daughter Ada, or that beloved sister Augusta, about his affection for whom such awful charges have been piled against his memory. Miss Leigh's narrative is for the most part written in her own neat hand—small and ladylike—and shows in every sentence the composition of an educated, but certainly not of a literary lady. The later portion of the manuscript is in another hand, is not so grammatical, or so orthographically correct as the previous portion, and appears to have been dictated to an amanuensis, while she was suffering from illness.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

"I am the fourth child of a family of seven. [Miss Leigh does not mention her own name or that of her mother at the commencement of her narrative, but plunges at once, in Homeric fashion, into the detail of the events which decided her fate.] My eldest sister, Georgiana, married Mr. Henry Trevanion, a distant cousin, in 1826, when I was eleven years old. The marriage, which had met the approbation of no one except my mother, did not turn out very happily, owing to the smallness of fortune, and the uneven temper of both parties. I was frequently called in to keep them company, and in March, 1829 (after they had been married three years), it was decided that I should accompany them to a country house which had been placed at their disposal by my aunt Annabella, Lady Byron, during the time of my sister's approaching confinement. The house was in the neighbourhood of Canterbury. The last injunctions and admonitions I received from my mother on starting, were to devote myself in all things to please my brother-in-law, Mr. Trevanion; to get rid of the dislike I entertained for him, and to cease ridiculing him, as I had been in the habit of doing. I was urged more particularly to this course of behaviour in consideration not alone of his delicate health, but of the poverty which made him peculiarly sensitive. I promised compliance, and accompanied them to the country, as my mother and sister had arranged. My sister's illness, before her confinement, was the occasion of my being left much alone with Mr. Trevanion. Indeed, I found myself thrown entirely upon him for society. I was with him both in-doors and out, by day and by night, and was frequently sent by my sister into his bedroom on errands, after every one else in the house had retired to rest. Some months passed in this manner, during which Mr. Trevanion took advantage of my youth and weakness, and effected my ruin, and I found myself likely to become a mother, by one I had

ever disliked. Mr. Trevanion, when made aware of my position, implored me to tell Georgiana the truth, and throw him and myself upon her mercy. I did so. My misery and my repentance appeared to move her much; and she blamed herself for having thrown me so much in Henry's (Mr. Trevanion's) way. I was but fifteen years of age at this time—in the year 1830. My sister concerted with her husband as to the steps to be taken, and it was agreed between them that they should ask my mother's opinion to take me abroad along with them. Permission was obtained without much difficulty, and when I was within three or four months of my confinement, I was taken by them to Calais. The misery and anguish of mind which I suffered contributed, along with my weak state of health, to bring on a premature confinement; and I was delivered clandestinely, under my sister's roof, of a male child, which was taken away, to be brought up under the charge of the medical gentleman who attended me. Three months afterwards, when my health was partially restored, Mr. and Mrs. Trevanion returned to England with me—they to the house of an aunt, and I to the house of my mother. My mother did not appear to have a suspicion of any kind. Mr. Trevanion came very often—almost daily—to see me, and his visits were not in any way discouraged by my mother. My mother, at this time, endeavoured to force me, much against my wish, into society and balls, though I endeavoured to excuse myself on account of my extreme youth, and by the fact that I was in mourning for another sister whom we had recently lost. [Here Miss Leigh enters into the details of some efforts that she was informed were made, in some unaccountable and very mysterious way, by the then Lord Byron, or a person deputed by him, to discover the facts connected with the birth of her child; and of her being informed by the doctor at Calais, who had taken charge of it, that it had died at three months old of convulsions. She goes on to say]:—During the whole autumn and winter of this year I was constantly left in Henry's (Trevanion's) society; and early in 1831, I, for the second time, found myself likely to become a mother. He begged and entreated me to confide in my mother, and wrote a letter, which I copied and signed, in which I invoked her assistance in my trouble. She burned this letter as soon as she read it, and was at first very kind to me; though she afterwards became very cruel. It was finally agreed between her and Georgiana, that I should leave London and accompany my sister and her husband into the country: I was not told what part. This was in March, 1831. In June of the same year, or three months afterwards, Colonel Leigh* unexpectedly arrived at the country house, preceded by an attorney and a sheriff's officer.* These parties having gained admittance, Colonel Leigh drove up to the door in a travelling carriage. His old coachman was on the box, and a woman, intended to represent a lady's maid, sat inside. What ensued was great misery to me. I then believed, *though I had been told the contrary by my sister and her husband*, that Colonel Leigh was my father. I wished to spare him the knowledge of my shame. We were never, any of us, taught to love and honour him. But, strange to say, I was his favourite child, and had greater influence over him than any one when he was violent, and would have done anything to hide his faults or spare his feelings. I was allowed to have ten minutes' private conversation alone with Henry, during which he exacted a promise from me that I would escape as soon as possible from my mother, and run away with him. Colonel Leigh proposed to take me home with him, and sent me to my room to prepare for my journey while the carriage waited. I found Georgiana in my room, apparently in great distress of mind. She begged forgiveness of me if she had done me any wrong, assured me that she would immediately procure a divorce, and that then I could marry Henry if disposed to do so. Colonel Leigh showed much emotion, as did every one present; but all his grief seemed dispelled at the first turnpike, *in his eagerness to pass crooked farthings.*†

"At 12 o'clock at night we arrived in London, and stopped somewhere in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, where Colonel Leigh dismissed his own carriage, called a hackney-coach from the stand, and made me enter it along with him. We were driven I know not whither, until we arrived at a house where I was given into the charge of a lady. The windows of the room into which I was put were securely nailed and fastened down, and there were outside chains and bolts, and other fastenings to the door. There was every show and ostentation of a prison. During my confinement in this place, Colonel Leigh came to see me three times, when I declined to see him any more. My mother came once. Some religious books were sent to me by one of my aunts, I forget which. After a fortnight, when one day, looking into the street from the closed window, I recognised Trevanion driving by with Georgiana, he saw me; and afterwards, for another fortnight, continued to drive by almost every day. Notes were sewed in my linen when it came from the wash, I did not know by whom, but I suspected by my sister. By this means I was enabled to understand the signs he made to me when he drove past the house. One day the lady to whose care I had

* Her supposed father, and the husband of Mrs. Leigh.

* Miss Leigh, in her ignorance of the world, appears to have mistaken a doctor, or a keeper from a private lunatic asylum, for a sheriff's officer.

† The meaning of this phrase, if it have any, is difficult to explain.—EDITOR.

been entrusted told me that if I liked to walk out of the house nobody would stop me, and showed me how to remove the chains affixed to the door. I did not hesitate in any choice between two evils, but at once put on my bonnet, followed her instructions, and found Trevanion outside waiting to receive me. We left the street with all possible haste and secrecy, which we might have spared ourselves, as nobody attempted to follow us.

"We made our way to the Continent, and for two years after this time lived together as man and wife on the coast of Normandy, under the assumed name of Monsieur and Madame Aubin. My sister applied for the divorce as promised, but Trevanion informed me some time after that it could not be obtained. An active correspondence of some kind was kept up between him and his wife, perhaps about the divorce, and the Earl of Chichester wrote to him several times, urging his separation from me; and though I never read their letters, I was told by Trevanion what they were about, and that he and Lord Chichester could not agree. At last, however, as my health grew more and more delicate every day, and as Trevanion began to lose hope that I should ever bear a living child, he agreed to my wish that we should separate. I wrote to my mother informing her of my earnest desire and intention to enter as a boarder in a convent in Lower Brittany. The letter remained unanswered for a considerable time; but after much delay and difficulty, I left Trevanion and entered a convent, my mother engaging to allow me £60 a year. But I was again likely to become a mother. And now my greatest hope was that I might in some way be able to conceal the delicate state of my health, which forbad the hope that the child would live. Other circumstances combined with this to make me leave the convent, which I did with the permission of the abbess, who also allowed me to have my letters addressed there as usual. I had the hope of entering another convent, at a later time when I should have no reason to leave it, and I did not feel that I was doing wrong. Trevanion was not under the same roof with me, and from the time I entered the convent I never was but as a sister to him. After eight months I gave birth to my little girl (who still lives), to H.'s (Trevanion's) great joy. At that time an uncle of H.'s undertook to come and see him; and he, discovering that I was no longer in a convent, wrote to my mother. We (Trevanion and I) continued to live on, in an old chateau, in a secret and unfrequented spot, in great poverty, but as brother and sister. Henry at this time gave himself up wholly to religion and shooting; I to my child. We never met alone, and seldom met at all. Sixteen months afterwards poverty forced H. to go to England, and after an absence of six weeks he returned with money. Then I saw remains of what I had thought wholly extinguished — his passionate attachment to me. But I was no longer a child—I was twenty-one; and two years' experience had enabled me to know how to resist. I pass over three years of misery; but I am willing to give every detail of what I was made to suffer, though I do not think it is absolutely necessary to do so. In the spring of 1838, the hardships I had endured caused me to fall dangerously ill; and after some days my life, contrary to all expectation, was saved, though I was declared to be in a consumption, without hope of living beyond a few months. The medical man who attended me was very kind, and the little experience of kindness which I had had during my lifetime, made me, at his solicitation, confide to him my real history. I asked his aid to free me from the cruelty of one whom I had never really loved, and who by his conduct every day convinced me more and more of his worthlessness. My greatest wish was to die away from him. Through Mr. C.'s means* I wrote to my mother, and my aunt, Lady Chichester, informing them of my position, and imploring the means to free myself. I obtained £5, left Trevanion's roof, and went to the neighbouring town, where I continued to receive most affectionate letters from my mother, but very little money. I endeavoured to persuade her to allow me regularly £120 per annum—the smallest sum I could live on in a very cheap place. She promised, but did not perform; so that after a year and a half I found I should be compelled, as I was advised to do, to sell the reversion to £3000 which I had, with some difficulty, obtained as a provision for my child, after my death, if I did not wish to be forced to return to Mr. Trevanion. During some months the correspondence between myself and my mother continued as affectionate as ever, I endeavouring all the while to obtain from her the means of existence, and she retaining the Deed. At length I wrote to my aunt, Lady Chichester, who had sent me the £5, begging her influence to obtain the Deed for me, and to Sir George Stephen, to whom I had applied to sell the reversion, stating that I was sure my aunt, Lady Noel Byron, would use any influence she might possess with my mother, to induce her to give up to me that which was my right. Some months previously, on my having implored interference from England to save me from Mr. Trevanion's tyranny and persecution, Sir R. Horton proposed to me that he (Trevanion) should be thrown into prison for a debt which he had contracted to Lady Noel Byron, at the time of his marriage, and which sum alone had enabled the marriage to take place. I was well aware that it was understood that this sum was never to be repaid. Sir R. Horton assured me of Lady By-

* The medical gentleman alluded to, whose name is not fully given by Miss Leigh.

ron's consent to such a measure. I openly expressed my opinion of such a dishonourable transaction. I rejected such interference, and even informed Mr. Trevanion of what had been proposed to me, in order that he might guard against what was neither honourable nor just. On Sir George Stephen forwarding my letter to Lady Byron, I received a most kind and affectionate letter from Lady Byron, and money, with offers of protection for myself and child, and the power of quitting a neighbourhood which was most painful to me. This was in August, 1840. I willingly and joyfully accepted these offers, and accompanied a medical gentleman whom Lady Byron had sent, and met her at Tours, where it was first thought I should reside. Lady Byron, however, proposed that I should accompany her to Paris, and remain with her for a time. I did so, being desirous of attending to the least wishes of one towards whom I had reason to feel so grateful.

"At Fontainebleau, where she was detained by illness, *Lady Byron informed me of the cause of the deep interest she felt, and must ever feel, for me. Her husband had been my father.* She implored and sought my affection by every means; and almost exacted my confidence to the most unlimited extent. I was willing and anxious, in any and every way I could, to prove both my gratitude and the desire I so sincerely felt to repay by my affection and devotion any pain she must have felt for circumstances connected with my birth and her separation from Lord Byron. Her only wish, she said, was to provide for me, according to Lord Byron's intentions respecting me, and according to my rank in life. She evinced much anxiety for my health and comfort, expressed indignation for all I had suffered, spoke of the comfort I would be to her, and of the necessity that I should be a devoted child to her. There was a Chancery suit begun against my mother, to obtain possession of the Deed. All these circumstances decided me on staying with Lady Byron till that should be settled. I received money from her in small sums and presents, but nothing was definitely settled. We continued nine or ten months in Paris. At the latter period of this time, Ada and Lord Lovelace came over, and I received kindness and promises from both, and was made to feel that I was to be Ada's sister in all things, as I was really. In May, 1841, I accompanied Lady Byron to England, and remained for a few months, during which she showed me letters of Lord Byron, relating to her separation, which, as she afterwards said, might be useful in the Chancery suit. Mistreatment of an illness rendered me too ill to quit England that autumn without great difficulty and expense, which I was always anxious to avoid. All this rendered me the more desirous to comply with Lady Byron's earnest wish that I should not leave her, which, she used to say, would cost her her life. Even after my experience I could not believe (though her temper caused me great misery, and her strange arrangements were often most painful) that all her affection was assumed. In May, 1842, my long anxiety in the matter of the Chancery suit was ended. The suit was concluded in a way, without consultation with me, that showed me that all that had been promised me, unsolicited and unsought, was not sincere, and that I had been in a manner sacrificed in my mother's interest. I openly expressed to Lady Byron all I felt, and my determination of leaving England immediately, and solicited from her (Lady Byron) the means to do so. She again continued, as ever, saying that it was for her to provide as Lord Byron would have done, &c., &c. But on finding that the impressions I had received were not to be done away with, she spoke of the necessity of my having a lady to live with me abroad. This I rejected, because I knew of no one whose constant society I could wish for, and I had never given her in any way to believe that I could submit to such. Matters continued unsettled, and my increasing ill-health made me desirous of immediately quitting England, and going to the South of France, where I had long been ordered (by medical advice) to go. In July, 1842, there began a correspondence, talking of conditions, that I had never heard of till then, informing me that Lady Byron would allow me £150 per annum for my maintenance, besides paying the wages of a lady's-maid that she and Lady Lovelace had engaged for me some months before, and who had never lived but in the richest families. On being engaged for my service she mentioned her particular desire of being with a lady whose conduct had ever been irreproachable. This appeared so strong a wish on her part, and was so often expressed, that after a short time I told her what she could not but have suspected, from all she was a witness of, that she had better avail herself of the opportunity of quitting me, as my life and past history were not such as she would wish. She thanked me, refused to quit me, and assured me of her devotion under all circumstances. I informed Lady Byron of my belief that it would be impossible for me to live where she proposed, at Hyères, for £150 per annum; that I would endeavour to do so, but that I would not, as in the past, suffer poverty and privation; and that whatever sum in addition (to the £150) should be necessary for my health and Marie's education, I should endeavour to procure in some other way. To this she answered, 'How can you imagine I will ever let you want either?' She assured me of her affection by words, and of her unmerited and unjust mistrust—by her actions, and by every arrangement she made for me, which seemed to me most ingeniously painful—such as exacting that my money should be paid to the maid, and that she

should expect to receive from her an account of the way in which the money was spent. This it was agreed *my servant* should do. Lady Byron sent me £40 to travel to Hyères with, recommending me to travel in the most comfortable way, &c. I was anxious not to judge hastily, but trusted that when Lady Byron's health improved (she was ill), she would be more just and reasonable. I also was ill, and asked Lady Byron, as my maid-servant suggested I should do, that I should have a man-servant to travel with me. Lady Byron consented, and my maid's husband, being out of place, was fixed upon. After consultation with Ada and Lord Lovelace, it was thought best I should leave, and Ada promised, and I thought I might trust to such, to watch over and protect me, assuring me her mother was deeply attached to me. I trusted to this, and left England on Friday evening, the 22nd of July, 1842. And partly in order to prove to Lady Byron my earnest wish to please her still, and on my maid's solicitation on account of their importance, in the event of my death, I left a box of letters and papers with Lady Noel Byron's housekeeper, to be given to Lady Byron on her return to Moore Place; and the Deed of Appointment to Ada on her leaving me at 6 o'clock that evening, to be deposited with Lord Lovelace's papers at Ockham. The Deed I had kept till then in my own possession, and intended doing so, fearing to let it again escape me.* The letters and papers are all most important to me. Lady Byron had asked me to, and by my promise made me, leave them to her by my will. And when she begged me only a few days previously, never to mistrust her affection, I thought this would convince her (that I did not do so). When she never acknowledged their receipt in any letter, I was still far from suspecting she would do what she is now doing—making her lawyer give evasive answers, and denying me what I entrusted with confidence to her honour."

[The concluding portion of Miss Leigh's narrative is not in her own handwriting, and appears to have been written to her dictation. It is by no means so clear, so consecutive, or so grammatical as the preceding parts of the story—facts which are possibly to be accounted for by Miss Leigh's ill-health, and the inattention or inexperience in composition, of her amanuensis.]

"Though I travelled as expeditiously as my health allowed—and much more so—on arriving at Lyons, there was not money enough to pay the boat, &c.; and from the arrangements, much difficulty in obtaining the £37 from the bankers there. After three days we proceeded on our journey, but on arriving at Hyères we were again without (money). I wrote, and my maid also wrote, as she had been requested to do, in case of increased illness; and Lady Byron was informed of my indisposition most fully, and of all expenses and probabilities of such. She approved, and continued her terms of affection as ever; engaged to neglect no expense for my health; wished me to get masters for Marie's education; to hire carriages, &c., for my driving out, and said she would send me books from England. I insisted most minutely on expense,* and endeavoured most earnestly to avoid all. And when Lady Byron suggested my moving elsewhere to a cheaper place, I adopted all I was capable of—that of approaching Toulon. To concur in all her wishes, a country-house about three-quarters of a league from Toulon was hired. I wrote, as well as my man-servant—sending the accounts monthly, with every detail. She (Lady Byron) approved of all; but in November wrote concerning the rent of the house of which I told my man-servant, who was responsible, and whom Lady Byron wished to stay with me till further notice. He got certificates as to the rent being far from unreasonable, from the mayor of Hyères, and from an English gentleman residing near. These satisfied Lady Byron, or seemed to do so, and though she always said he (the man-servant) was to go, her non-payment of what she had agreed to give him prevented his doing so. She received the monthly expenses (accounts) from him; and, though I neither complied with all her wishes that I should incur expense, and deprived myself and child of all I possibly could, it was not possible that they should not exceed £150 a year. She expressed no dissatisfaction. We were always without money, from all being spent and much owing, before any more arrived. But all this she was well aware of, through her own arrangements, of knowing how the money was spent and all I was in want of. In December she expressed dissatisfaction, and accused me of rendering all the money arrangements as vexatious as possible to her, as may be seen in her correspondence. She exacted receipts from me of all the sums that had been paid, saying I had received them in the name of my maid. I wrote briefly back, regretting only that she could say or think what was so far from being true."

[At this point the narrative becomes so confused as to be all but unintelligible; but it is reprinted *verbatim et literatim*, in order that possible injustice may not be done by any attempt to put it into a shape that might be erroneous.]

"The bankers who paid the money informed them it was paid by Lady Noel Byron's orders

* It would appear from this, though Miss Leigh omitted to mention the fact in its proper place in her narrative, that by means of the Chancery suit she had recovered the Deed from her mother.—Ed.

* Thus in the original; but evidently from the context meaning, "on not incurring expense."—Ed.

—her own arrangements having been what she accused me of; and refused, till I heard further, giving the signature required. From her answer —in which she informed me of the necessity of having that signature to answer the malicious interpretation her conduct, from peculiar circumstances, might be guilty of towards me, and which my signature alone could answer — and also finding she would send more to answer the 600 francs due for the rent she had long been aware must be paid by the 20th of December; and, being without any, I gave the signature of my maid's having faithfully paid me the several sums, and at the same time asked for £20, necessary for an arrangement for my little girl's education. She sent the money necessary for the rent, which my man-servant had paid from what she had sent a few days previously to pay him. I never saw the letters that passed from her to him, and having had no control whatever over the money paid for my maintenance, neither ever having clearly understood its application, cannot explain it. But when I received Lady Byron's answer to me—she should pay him no further after the 1st of January—I told him so. He laughed, and said by her letters to him, she must write so to him, and assured me of his devotion, &c., to me, and his intention of sooner than leaving me and his wife in the position Lady Byron placed us, to stay for nothing. I could say nothing. Lady Byron returned no answer to the £20 I had asked, but sent expressions of affection, &c., which I could neither trust nor value. My maid and her husband urged me, and recommended me most strongly, by every means in their power, to profit by the money he had received, and go to Paris while yet I was able, and there endeavour to obtain a more certain and suitable arrangement. After reflection, I agreed to do so. They protested much devotion—promised me much—and, insupportable as was my position, I caught at the straw thus offered me, and was very grateful for it. In March, 1843, I went to Paris, of which I informed Lady Byron as briefly as possible, and consulted M. Berryer, who promised to write and use his influence, which he did not doubt would succeed. Finding that he delayed, I wrote to Lady Byron, and explained why I came to Paris. To this I received no answer, but a visit from Miss Davison, to tell me I must beg Lady Byron's pardon, and assure me of her affection.* I waited an answer to my letter. My servants wrote; Mons. Berryer waited; and thus things continued till the beginning of May. Lady Byron in the meantime wrote to my servants, accusing them of having forwarded my going to Paris, which they denied; and also accusing my maid of not having fulfilled the office of spy, which she had undertaken to fill. This my maid denied, and also refused to quit me in such a position, as exacted by Lady Byron. Lady Byron also wrote to the master of the hotel, accusing me of what I had never done—of using her credit; and telling him all she could of the past history of my life that could be unfavourable and painful. My servants obtained money, once or twice, from a friend of Lady Byron, Miss Doyle, then in Paris; and at length we were able to get lodgings. Early in May my maid came and told me, one Sunday afternoon, that Dr. King had come from Lady Byron and had asked for Miss Leigh. I refused to see him, and told him to communicate with Mons. Berryer, who at last—but only two or three days previously—had written to Lady Byron. He waited some time, and sent me in an accusation;* and a proposal from Lady Byron that I should resign to her all control over myself and child. This I instantly refused, and told him, through my maid and Mons. Berryer, that he might leave Paris within the forty-eight hours, as he threatened to do, for I should never sign. On the Wednesday he sent a humble, supplicating letter, asking to see me. To comply with Mons. Berryer's wish, I did so. He showed letters, &c., on which, and after some days' calculation and divers propositions, he offered me £300 a year. To Mons. Berryer he promised what Mons. Berryer desired [here the MS. again becomes confused], and was absolutely necessary for me to live on this sum, circumstanced as I was in Paris. What I already knew of Dr. King and my seeing him agreed. He was a great friend with my servants, whom he, when not present, blamed. The mission he had undertaken, together with his mode of fulfilling it, gave me no confidence. When he refused, I included what I knew could not be dispensed with, and that he had agreed to; and attempted by intimidation to make me sign what I knew would not be fulfilled, and would therefore give rise to new complications which I was anxious to avoid, I refused to sign. I submitted to all the abuse he was pleased to bestow —though it contributed all the more to make me refuse — when he said, 'Sign, sign, you great fool!' He left Paris the next morning; and on my writing to Messrs. Wharton to forward the Deed to Paris, to Mons. Berryer, they refused unless I would send a person to them to receive it; informing me at the same time that, had I signed, the conditions would not have been fulfilled; the same to Mons. Berryer, informing him that I had contracted the Deed on certain conditions. Lady Byron wrote to my maid informing her of her illness. My maid decided on going to England to get paid for her husband, and told me of Mons. Berryer's advice that she should receive the Deed, for I could not go myself, not being well enough. I hesitated,

* It seems as if the pronouns were misplaced in this passage, and that it should read, "and assure *her* of *my* affection."—Ed.

* Thus in the original.

but gave her the authority which was necessary —having little choice—an order authorizing her to receive the box of papers I was anxious for. I entrusted her with a letter to my mother, whom she much urged me to address. I also gave her the name and direction of my family in case she should be in difficulties in England; and it was agreed she should go first and consult Lady Mahon, whom she had been formerly recommended to. She obtained £5 for her journey from Miss Davison, and set off. The letters which she wrote to me and her husband showed that she was not acting as had been agreed upon. I went with her letter to Mons. Berryer, who recommended my going to Mr. Bulwer, of the British Embassy, who instantly said it was of the greatest importance to prevent her getting possession of the Deed. I acted according to his instructions, and awaited the result of an interview he was to have with Mons. Berryer, who, he said, had not sufficiently considered the case. He recommended that I should conciliate Lady Byron; but, above all, he distrusted my servants. They behaved most insolently, and every day my misery increased. Captain De B—— came to Paris and called upon me. He agreed with Mons. Berryer that I ought to go to England and conciliate Lady Byron, if it were possible. He refused to listen to the details of my past life, or even to look at letters relating to my present. He had only known me in the South of France as Madame Aubin, and I had a grateful recollection of the kindness I had received from him as such, listened with confidence to the advice he gave me, acted in accordance with it, and by his means was enabled to come to England. I am still indebted to him for that and for my subsistence since my arrival. I have seen my maid since, whose behaviour in all things made me distrust her more and more; and though I endeavoured to keep friends with her, as Captain De B—— recommended, it was impossible to submit to the untrue accusations she made. My patience got exhausted one evening, since when I have heard no more of her, nor her charges of ingratitude. To these I can only say, for what am I to be grateful, either to Lady Byron, my mother, my sister, Mr. Trevanion, and, indeed, all who charge me with it? Kindness I feel; but I do not fear having to answer this charge (of ingratitude) from Him who will demand an account of all.

"Since I have been in London Sir George Stephen has called. I have received anonymous letters, and Lord Chichester has written twice requesting me not to reject Lady Byron's kindness, liberality, and generosity, of all of which I am ignorant after the past, and Captain B——'s interview with Mr. Wharton.*

"This is a brief sketch of a long life of misery and sorrow. Whatever is not clear or too brief I can explain. I have done my best to make it clear, particularly in all that relates to Lady Byron, whom, if I could, I would still believe kind in her intentions, though far from kind in her actions. Now, I cannot, though I would, say otherwise than that she has cruelly deceived me, and is as guilty in thus oppressing and driving me to the utmost extremity as the mother, who has only made me the instrument to serve her avarice and the sacrifice to be made to those she feared.

"(Signed) Elizabeth Medora."

In addition to this minute and painful narrative, that bears upon it the impress of truthfulness, as far as the belief and conviction of the writer are concerned—though coloured perhaps by her passion, her prejudices, or even her ignorance, or it might even be said, her innocence of the world and the world's ways, though she was by no means innocent of evil, and does not represent herself as being so—Miss Leigh wrote in a shorter form an epitome of the events of her unhappy life, which was forwarded by her to the Duke of Leeds, who, like herself, was a descendant of the Baroness Conyers, and to whom she had applied, as she did to many other relatives, for advice and assistance. The copy of this letter was enclosed to Mr. S——, by Captain De B——, in the following note, undated, but bearing the postmark of August 24th, 1843:—

"Dear S——,—Enclosed I send you a copy of what Miss Leigh yesterday wrote in answer to an enclosure of £10 from the Duke of Leeds. He is the only one who has answered. I have been somewhat occupied, or I would have called.

"Miss Leigh has been unwell, I presume from over-anxiety. Should anything transpire I will write or send to you.

"Very truly yours,

"J. De B.

"P.S. It is entirely her own composition. *I* did not like it."

"8, Church Row, Old St. Pancras,
"August 23, 1843."

"Your Grace,—I beg most gratefully to acknowledge the receipt of the £10 you sent for the relief of my distress; and, though fearing, from the briefness of its enclosure, to be deemed presuming or intrusive, the hard pressure of misery drives me to do that for which I solicited your Grace's permission.

"Ruined at the age of fifteen, by the unprincipled man to whom I was exposed by those whose duty it was to watch over and protect me (and from whom I alone freed myself three years since), I unexpectedly found kindness and protection for myself and child, from one whose subsequent conduct proves how deeply I was deceived in trusting to her as I did, gratefully and sincerely, and in giving what she sought—all I had to

* The nature of this interview and its results, if any, are not stated by Miss Leigh.

give—unbounded confidence; after giving more than I had long hoped to receive from those near to me—affection, and trying to waken in me, what I never possessed, a taste for the delicacies, &c., my broken health required, and which money alone can procure, and teaching me all I had yet to learn of the infamy of the mother, once so dearly loved, that I owed my birth to incest and adultery; to impress on me the claims I had (which I did not seek) to be enabled to live according to the rank in life to which I was born, I found myself placed by her in a position not to be endured, dependent on servants over whom I had no control, unable to have what was necessary for my health, and refused what my child's education required; and, in the endeavours I have made to save myself from such, have found destitution.

"Though Mons. Berryer, Captain De B——, and Mr. S——, who have kindly endeavoured to help me—the first by addressing Lady Byron on my behalf, the others in becoming the channels of communication denied directly to me—have been met by distrust, almost by disdain; three times have I, as I was wished, sought, humbly asked pardon, if I had displeased or pained by the step I had taken, to alter the position in which I had been placed. She who had shown me kindness, who had called me 'her other child,' and begged me, when in every other point she might err, 'never to mistrust her affection, which could not change,' has now unhesitatingly accused me of what has been proved untrue, and detained, and still detains, on false pretensions, what I entrusted to her care, and seeks, dares, and drives me to what I now do, to ask aid and protection from all. The only resource for existence I have is a Deed of Appointment for £3000, payable at the death of Lady Byron and my mother, the sole provision made for me out of the large property she received from my father—and her brother—Lord Byron. For nearly three months I have been indebted for the existence of myself and child to the kindness of those on whom I have no claim but pity, but who know me as I am, and not as those who have cast me on the world without home or protection would have me.

"The distance at which your Grace is, renders it difficult to do as I should be anxious, to give all and every proof of the truth of what I advance and which is known to those alike respected and respectable. I must beg your Grace's indulgence to what I now write, as I am suffering from the effects of over-exertion, not to deny me the protection I so much need. I could say much more, but almost a stranger as I am to your Grace, I can only beg you to consider my desolate and destitute position and its causes, and subscribe myself most gratefully, your grace's

"Obedient humble servant,
"E. M. Leigh.

"His Grace the Duke of Leeds,
"Mar Lodge, Braemar, N.B."

Before writing this letter to the Duke of Leeds and making application to various other relatives, Miss Leigh had made efforts to communicate with or see her mother. In a note from Captain De B——to Mr. S——, dated the 15th of August, the former states: "Miss Leigh has not received any answer to any of her notes forwarded on Saturday. She called on her mother, but was refused. 'Not at home!' Miss Leigh has a wish to forward the enclosed (three letters); perhaps you may be able to put the addresses upon them. Should anything transpire, I will lose no time in letting you know. If you should *not* approve of the letter to Mrs. Leigh, retain it."

A memorandum on the back of Captain De B——'s note, dated August 16, shows that its receipt was acknowledged in the following terms next day:—

"I received your note with Miss Leigh's three enclosures. We (Mr. S—— and his partner) think that to Mrs. Leigh is very proper and natural under the circumstances; but is it not somewhat premature? A day or two may make an important change, and we think a short time may yet be given for answers to the letters already sent. We retain them till we see or hear from you."

Two of the letters were addressed to Miss Leigh's cousins, the Hon. D'Arcy Osborne, and the Hon. W. Osborne, and were as follow:—

"8, Church Row, St. Pancras,
"August 14, 1843.

"When I was a happy child, you used to be kind and good-natured to me. Now that I am in suffering and misery, will you refuse me what I am compelled to ask of all who will give it me—aid and protection? I am sure you will not, if you will let me tell you why I am so.

"Your cousin,
"Elizabeth Medora Leigh.

"To the Hon. Wm. Osborne."

"8, Church Row, St. Pancras,
"August 14, 1843.

"I have thought that, though so many long years have gone by since we met, you will not have forgotten, or refuse to befriend, one you were once fond of;—destitute, alone in the world, forced to seek aid and protection from all who give it. I do not think you will refuse to listen and hear why I am so, and then accord me the help and assistance that are in your power. If I am mistaken in so thinking, forgive this application from your cousin,

"Elizabeth Medora Leigh."

The third letter, the one to Mrs. Leigh, is the most painful of all the documents in this unhappy case, and must have been written under deep feelings of irritation, caused by her mother's refusal to see her or admit her into her house. It is of such a nature, that, after mature deliberation, we

have deemed it both expedient and proper to exclude it from these pages.

Whether Mrs. Leigh were innocent of the charge against her—which we believe and shall attempt to prove hereafter—or guilty, of which there is no evidence, it was not likely that a letter such as this was, haughty, unfilial, and cruel, could have any effect in softening her heart towards her daughter. That it was actually sent to her appears from a letter of Captain De B—— to Mr. S——, dated more than five weeks afterwards:

"September 20, 1843.

"Dear Sir,—Miss Leigh has not received any answer to her letter to her mother, and she now wishes to know if she shall make application to Sir F. Rowe, for a private interview. I have told her that I had not the least objection to accompany her, but that, unless asked for by Sir Frederick, I had no wish for my name going abroad.

"She seems to say that both you and me (*sic*) promised to go with her to Sir Frederick. Is it your idea of the case? If so, pray let me know. Her hopes to answers, as she expected, have turned out, as I said, *blanks*.

"I shall expect a few lines from you to-morrow morning. I would have called; but, to prevent misunderstanding, I would rather have your answer to this; as she seems to think you and me were to be present at the interview with Sir Frederick. I remain,

"Yours most truly,
"J. De B——."

An additional letter from Miss Leigh to Captain De B——'s agent will complete the correspondence. It would appear from Captain De B——'s previous communication, that it was in contemplation to ask the aid of a police magistrate, with what distinct object it is now impossible to ascertain, though it may not unreasonably be suspected that it had reference to the missing box of family papers:—

"My dear Sir,—I called on Mr. S—— on Friday morning, being anxious that my affairs should terminate; and he begged that I should write and ask you to name the time when it would be convenient for me to see and confer with you as to the steps to be taken, which I would do at your office. I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours very sincerely,
"Elizabeth Medora Leigh.

"Thursday, October 12, 1843.
"Address Madame Aubin, 18, Aldenham Terrace,
"Old St. Pancras Road."

Thus ends the correspondence that came into the possession of the friends and correspondents of Captain De B——, in connection with Miss Leigh. It does not appear that the threatened application to Bow Street was ever made, or that any reconciliation between Miss Leigh and Lady Byron was ever effected. Upon this subject Mr. S——, in a letter dated the 24th of September, 1869, twenty-six years after the time in which these events occurred, and forty-five years after the death of Lord Byron, writes: "I did not succeed in my endeavours, and my failure is somewhat contradictory of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's statement, that Lady Byron never faltered, never gave over in motherly tenderness towards the lady whom she calls 'the child of sin.' I ascertained at the same time (1843), that the so-called 'secret' was known to very many persons besides Dr. Lushington and Sir George Stephen, and I do not know how to reconcile this fact with the 'dignified and magnanimous silence' claimed as a merit for Lady Byron; for if she did not impart the knowledge, who else can have done so?"

It is possible, however, although the circumstance may never have come to the knowledge of Captain De B—— or Mr. S——, that at some after-time, when Miss Leigh passed out of their vision, she may have agreed to *all* the terms demanded of her by Lady Byron, been restored to her favour and protection, and ended her days in the receipt of her bounty.

However that may be, Miss Leigh, with her sins, her sorrows, and her sufferings, and bearing with her her little daughter Marie, disappeared at the close of the year 1843, from the great, heartless, busy, cruel world of London, and soon afterwards sank into that beneficent grave, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." She sinned much, was much and grievously sinned against, and suffered penalties too great for her haughty spirit and her weak frame to bear. Her mother, her mother's husband, Lady Byron, her sister, and her sister's husband, all the persons mainly implicated in her story, have all followed her to the tomb; and her narrative, and the story told by Lady Byron to Mrs. Stowe, remain the only foundations on which Lady Byron's awful charge against her husband's memory can rest, as far as is now known to the world. We have already endeavoured to show that Lady Byron's story, as told by Mrs. Stowe, cannot be true, unless Lady Byron herself were at one and at the same time a paragon of superhuman and of angelic virtue, and one of the most heartless hypocrites that ever lived. We now proceed to examine into the truth of Miss Leigh's allegations, to compare the two narratives together, and to show that this odious charge against Lord Byron was not concocted until long after his death.

PART III.

RECAPITULATION OF THE NARRATIVES OF MRS. BEECHER STOWE AND MEDORA LEIGH, AND VINDICATION OF LORD BYRON.

PART III.

VINDICATION OF LORD BYRON.

If it be as true in the moral as in the physical world that there never can be smoke without fire, let us try to discover what is the fire, and what is its extent, which has produced the very black smoke that has been poured forth from the funnel of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's literary engine to darken the fame of Lord Byron, as well as of that other smoke, which obscures the air, in the melancholy story of Medora Leigh. To discover how the fire originated—and whose was the hand that first kindled and fed it with fuel—is the sole object of this volume. If on impartial examination of the two stories, which we shall strive to make as fair and unbiassed as the summing-up of a judge upon the bench, we seem to bear hard upon the reputations of persons hitherto unsuspected, who can make no reply, and who have long ago passed to their account, it must be remembered that the accusers of Lord Byron are the aggressors, and that for any evil consequences that may result to individuals in the search after "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," those only are to blame who took the initiative in calumny, and disinterred, as it were, the heart of a great poet for the gratification of a dastardly malice, or a no less dastardly curiosity, forty-five years after his errors and crimes—if he had committed any—ought to have been allowed to rest in the kind oblivion of the tomb, or the charitable construction of a world that does not possess too much genius to which to be ungrateful. Who does not remember the inscription upon the tomb of Shakspeare?—

> "Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
> To dig the dust enclosed here;
> Blest be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones!"

The awful imprecation startles the attention of the most indifferent in the solitude of the church of Stratford-upon-Avon, and falls upon the mind of the reverential admirer of Shakspeare's genius with all the solemnity of a voice from the other world. And the words, we think, convey a double meaning and admonition, and apply, not only to the perishing material part of the dead poet, but to the immortal soul; and warn the profane against the crime of raking up, from the sanctity that ought to enshroud them from the gaze of posterity, the secrets of the inner life that the poet lived, or the records of the errors into which the poet, no less than meaner mortals, may have fallen during his weary pilgrimage through the snares and pitfalls of the world. Somebody is greatly to be condemned for inventing such a charge as that of incest against Lord Byron—if the charge be an invention, as we shall endeavour to show. Somebody is almost as greatly to be condemned for giving unnecessary and malicious currency to it, even if it should prove to be well-founded.

Were the autobiography of Medora Leigh read entirely by itself, and without supporting evidence of its truth, it would be of little weight or importance. Though the narrative is plain, simple, and truth-like in its minuteness, and tells, at first, very terribly against the narrator; yet such a story might be a fiction—for fictions quite as life-like and as seemingly honest have often been invented, either to amuse or to defraud the public. But as regards Miss Leigh, the supposition that she drew up a wholly fictitious narrative cannot be reasonably entertained. She was truly the fourth child of the Hon. Augusta Leigh; and until she had passed her fifteenth year, and become precociously a woman, she lived as, and believed herself to be, the daughter of Colonel Leigh, and as legitimately the child of both these respectable people as the three elder and three younger children of the same marriage. There is, in her narrative, no doubt of her maternity; neither was it denied or doubted by Lady Byron, or by Dr. Lushington, or Sir George Stephen, acting in Lady Byron's behalf. This fact stands out clear and distinct, and must be accepted as positively true, whatever opinions may be formed of the complete or partial truth of the sad story of her life, as she relates it.

Let us glance at the Leigh family as it existed in the year 1816, when Lady Byron quitted her husband's roof, after trying to discover whether he were not insane, and persistently refusing to return to him. Colonel Leigh had married his cousin, the woman of his choice, and was living happily with her—if his happiness can be presumed from the number of his young family, and the absence of any whisper of his unhappiness in that outer world, which at the time was but too apt to pry into the secrets of Lord Byron's household, and of those connected with him by birth or marriage. Mrs. Leigh had lost her mother in her infancy, and her father when she was yet a child. As her mother, the Baroness Conyers, married her father, Captain Byron, in 1779, and died in 1781, the Hon. Augusta Byron (afterwards Mrs. Leigh), must have been born in 1780

or 1781, and had consequently arrived at the age of thirty-five or thirty-six at the time when she enjoyed the confidence and friendship (real or pretended) of Lady Byron, immediately prior to and for some weeks subsequent to her departure from her husband and her return to her parents. Mrs. Leigh's half-brother, Lord Byron, issue of his father's second marriage with Miss Gordon, was eight years her junior, and she had been accustomed to look upon him with a maternal as well as a sisterly affection—which was very natural when it is considered that he was a schoolboy when she was a married woman. She took a motherly interest in his health, his comfort, his character, and his career; and when time removed somewhat of the disparity between their ages, he returned her affection with an impulsiveness that reflected honour on the innate warmth and goodness of his nature. At the time of the separation, though a scandalous press—repeating the more scandalous innuendoes, hints, whispers, or broader accusations of society, that longed to humble the great Lord Byron because he was great—accused him of incest, as well as of murder, and even hinted that he was not only Childe Harold, but Conrad the Corsair, Alp the Renegade, if not Satan incarnate, the charge of incest made no impression on Lord Byron's mind. It passed by him as the idle wind, was not accepted by Lady Byron—as her letters to Mrs. Leigh, reprinted in the "Quarterly Review," sufficiently testify—and had, in all probability, never reached the privacy of Colonel Leigh's household, or been whispered into his ears or those of his wife.

It has always been a difficulty in the case—supposing the crime to have been committed—to discover how Lady Byron could have been made aware of it, either in 1816, if she suspected it then, or at the later period, after Lord Byron's death, when it is probable that the idea first took firm possession of her mind. Did Lord Byron divulge his guilt? Did Mrs. Leigh confess it? Did Colonel Leigh discover it? Or did Lady Byron make herself acquainted with the fact by some means not yet explained to the world? It is not likely that either Lord Byron or Mrs. Leigh would be so false to each other as to confess such a crime, and it is quite as unlikely, if such a crime had been confessed by either, that Colonel Leigh would have continued to live quietly and amicably with his wife until three more children had been born to them, and until his death. In reply to the question, whether Lady Byron might not have discovered some documentary proofs of a crime of which for years afterwards she kept the knowledge to herself and Dr. Lushington (if it be indeed true that *that* was the crime she divulged to him), there is nothing but the story of the breaking open of Lord Byron's writing-desk in his absence by Lady Byron, in a fit of jealousy, or by her confidante, Mrs. Charlemont, by Lady Byron's order or connivance. Lord Byron told the story of the desk to Captain Medwin, and spoke of it with more mildness than might have been expected from a man of his impetuous nature. "There was," he says—and the conversation occurred in 1821, five years after the separation—"one act of which I might justly have complained, and which was unworthy of any one but such a confidante. I allude to the breaking open my writing-desk. A book was found in it that did not do much credit to my taste in literature, and some letters from a married woman with whom I had been intimate before my marriage. The use that was made of the latter was most unjustifiable, whatever may be thought of the breach of confidence that led to their discovery. Lady Byron sent them to the husband of the lady, who had the good sense to take no notice of their contents. The *gravest* accusation that has been made against me is that of having intrigued with Mrs. Mardyn in my own house—introduced her to my own table, &c. There never was a more unfounded calumny. Being on the committee of Drury Lane Theatre, I have no doubt that several actresses called on me; but as to Mrs. Mardyn, who was a beautiful woman, and might have been a dangerous visitress, I was scarcely acquainted (to speak) with her."

Though Lord Byron in this passage spoke much too lightly of his intrigue with a married woman before his own marriage, it cannot be supposed that proof of incest with his sister could have been found in, or rather stolen from, his writing-desk, when he positively declares, that among all the charges brought against him, then and subsequently, the *gravest* was that *after* his marriage he had intrigued with a beautiful actress whom he only knew by sight, but scarcely knew to speak to. If this were the "gravest" charge, and one so satisfactorily disproved, there cannot have been the graver accusation of incest, unless Lord Byron believed—which none but a raging lunatic would suppose—that it was a graver offence to intrigue with an actress than to intrigue with his own married sister!

From all contemporary accounts, as well as from the revelations that have been made since the publication of Mrs. Stowe's "True Story," Mrs. Leigh, though a very excellent woman, was neither a beauty in the eyes of the great world, nor a very good manager within the little world of her own household. Let us take, for instance, the description given of her by Mrs. Shelley:—

"I have seen a great deal of Mrs. Leigh (Augusta). . . . Mrs. Leigh was like a mother to Byron, being so much older, *and not at all an attractive person.* I afterwards went with her, at her request, to pay a wedding-visit to Lady Byron when she returned to town, and she (Mrs. Leigh) expressed the greatest anxiety that his marriage should reform him. . . . My astonishment at the present accusation is unbounded: she

a Dowdy-Goody, I being then, I suppose, a young fine lady. Scrope Davies used to come to dinner, and talked to me a great deal about Byron afterwards, when he resided in the country, and I never remember a hint at this unnatural and improbable *liaison* when all London was at Byron's feet. . . . She must have been married (in 1807) when Byron was quite a boy. She had no taste for poetry. She had sad misfortunes in later years. Her excellent and only surviving daughter nursed her with the tenderest affection in her last illness. How any one could have been so wicked as to write so horrible a story of one too long dead to have friends left who could refute the story seems beyond belief."

The Leigh family were not rich in worldly goods—were always in pecuniary difficulty, from which they were not finally or even wholly relieved by the bequest made to them in the will of Lord Byron. We hear little of them except from Lord Byron, who, speaking of his sister to Lady Blessington at Genoa, the year before his death, said of her, and of himself:—

"My first and earliest impressions were melancholy—my poor mother gave them; *but to my sister, who, incapable of wrong herself, suspected no wrong in others, I owe the little good of which I can boast; and had I earlier known her, it might have influenced my destiny.* Augusta has great strength of mind, which is displayed not only in her own conduct, but to support the weak and infirm of purpose. To me she was, in the hour of need, as a tower of strength. *Her affection was my last rallying-point, and is now the only bright spot that the horizon of England offers to my view.* Augusta knew all my weaknesses, but she had love enough to bear with them. I value not the false sentiment of affection that adheres to one while we believe him faultless—not to love him would then be difficult: but give me the love that, with perception to view the errors, has sufficient force to pardon them—who can 'love the offender, yet detest the offence;' and this my sister had. *She has given me such good advice, and yet, finding me incapable of following it, loved and pitied me but the more because I was erring. This is true affection, and, above all, true Christian feeling. . . .*

"*Lord Byron speaks of his sister, Mrs. Leigh, constantly, and always with strong expressions of affection. He says she is the most faultless person he ever knew, and that she was his only source of consolation in his troubles on the separation.*"

These confessions to Lady Blessington, coupled, as they ought to be, with all that Lord Byron wrote and said to others who were intimate with him during the closing years of his life, do not point to the conclusion that his love for his sister was other than as pure and holy as he represented it to be in the beautiful poems which his love inspired. Nor did he forget his wife, or even once admit to any one a knowledge, even the slightest, of her cause of quarrel with him. "It is evident," writes Lady Blessington, "that Lady Byron occupies his attention continually. He introduces her name frequently; is fond of recurring to the brief period of their living together; dwells with complacency on her personal attractions, saying that, though not regularly handsome, he liked her looks. He is very inquisitive about her; was much disappointed that I had never seen her, nor could give any account of her appearance at present. In short, a thousand indescribable circumstances have left the impression on my mind that she occupies much of his thoughts and that they appear to revert continually to her and his child. He owned to me, that when he reflected on the whole tenor of her conduct—the refusing any explanation, never answering his letters, or holding out even a hope that in future years their child might form a bond of union between them — he felt exasperated against her, and vented this feeling in his writings; nay, more, he blushed for his own weakness in thinking so often and so kindly of one who certainly showed no symptom of ever bestowing a thought on him." If any more conclusive evidence than these conversations afford were wanting to prove that Lord Byron knew nothing of this awful charge of incest—any more than he did of a charge of piracy or murder, it may be found in the last letter which Lord Byron ever wrote, only a few days before his death, and left unfinished, addressed to his sister. The letter shows that eight years after the rupture, which would not have been final or irreparable except for Lady Byron's obduracy, Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh were on terms of friendly intimacy, and that they united in sending a joint report to Lord Byron on the health of his daughter Ada. It is dated Missolonghi, February 23rd, 1824:—

"My dearest Augusta,—I received a few days ago your and Lady Byron's report of Ada's health, with other letters from England, for which I ought to be, and am (I hope) sufficiently thankful, as they are of great comfort, and I wanted some, having been recently unwell, but am now much better, so that you must not be alarmed.

"You will have heard of our journeys, and escapes, and so forth—perhaps with some exaggeration; but it is all very well now, and I have been some time in Greece, which is in as good a state as could be expected, considering circumstances. But I will not plague you with politics, wars, or earthquakes, though we have had a rather smart one three nights ago, which produced a scene ridiculous enough, as no damage was done, except to those who stuck fast in the scuffle to get first out of the doors or windows; amongst whom some recent importations from England, who had

been used to quieter elements, were rather squeezed in the press for precedence.

"I have been obtaining the release of about nine-and-twenty Turkish prisoners—men, women, and children—and have sent them, at my own expense, home to their friends; but one pretty little girl of nine years of age, named Hato, or Hatagée, has expressed a strong wish to remain with me, or under my care; and I have nearly determined to adopt her, if I thought that Lady Byron would let her come to England as a companion to Ada. They are about the same age, and we could easily provide for her; if not, I can send her to Italy for education. She is very lively and quick, and with great black Oriental eyes and Asiatic features. All her brothers were killed in the revolution. Her mother wishes to return to her husband, who is at Trevisa. but says that she would rather entrust the child to me in the present state of the country. Her extreme youth and sex have hitherto saved her life, but there is no saying what might happen in the course of the war, and of such a war. I shall probably commit her to the care of some English lady in the islands for the present. The child herself has the same wish, and seems to have a decided character for her age.

"You can mention this matter, if you think it worth while. I merely wish her to be respectably educated and treated; and if my years and all things be considered, I presume it would be difficult to conceive me to have any other views.

"With regard to Ada's health, I am glad to hear that she is so much better; but I think it right that Lady Byron should be informed, and guard against it accordingly, that her description of much of her disposition and tendencies very nearly resembles that of my own at a similar age, except that I was much more impetuous. Her preference of *prose* (strange as it may seem) *was*, and indeed *is*, mine; for I hate reading verse, and always did, and I never invented anything but boats, ships, and generally something relative to the ocean. I showed the report to Colonel Stanhope, who was struck with the resemblance of parts of it to the paternal line, even now.

"But it is also fit, though unpleasant, that I should mention, that my recent attack—and a very severe one—had a strong appearance of epilepsy; why, I know not, for it is [not?] late in life. Its first appearance at thirty-six, and, so far as I *know*, it is not hereditary; and it is that it may not become so, that you should tell Lady Byron to take some precautions in the case of Ada.

"My attack has not returned, and I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise, and thus far with success—if merely casual, it is all very well."

A few days after writing this fragment, full of affectionate anxiety for his daughter Ada, Lord Byron expired; and his last coherent words were, "My wife—my child—my sister"—placing them, no doubt, in that solemn moment when the next world was opening before him, in the pure, holy, and natural order in which they stood in his heart.

Two years after the premature termination of a career glorious in itself, and that might have been as happy as it was glorious, had it not been for the ill-omened marriage which embittered and, to some extent, disgraced it—though only in the eyes of the malevolent, or the unthinking—we get the next glimpse into the family of Lord Byron's sister; and learn from Medora Leigh, in her Autobiography, that in the year 1826, when she was eleven years old, her eldest sister, Georgiana, was married to her distant cousin, Mr. Henry Trevanion, of Carhays, in Cornwall—a man, like the Leighs, not blessed with any superabundance of the gifts of fortune. The marriage was not a happy one. Perhaps there had never been much love in the case—even if poverty had not come in at the door, and forced such love as there was to fly out of the window. The characters of these two people, and of the young sister of Mrs. Trevanion, deserve especial study. What we know of the married couple is wholly derived from the evidence of the sister, who at the time of the marriage was a mere child, and who at the time of her first initiation into the world's wickedness—four years afterwards—was still a child in years, though a woman in experience of the evil communications that corrupt alike the heart, the manners, and the principles. Medora Leigh states that her sister's marriage met with no approval from any one except her mother, and that incompatibility of temper, as well as poverty, rendered it unhappy. She was thrown much into the society of the couple—not only while they resided under Colonel Leigh's roof, but at other places—and appears to have been somewhat carelessly left by Mrs. Leigh to the guidance of Mr. Trevanion. When this child—thus thrust, as it were, into the companionship of a man who had married a wife for whom he had no great or growing regard—had arrived at the age of fifteen, when her mind was pliant, when her education was incomplete, when her character was unformed, when she particularly required the guidance, the control, the love, and the continuous care of her father and mother, and of her mother especially—this Henry Trevanion (whose base unmanly conduct language fails to find adequate words to condemn) took advantage alike of her youth, her passions, and her inexperience, and betrayed the confidence of his wife, and of his wife's father and mother, and seduced her. The story is told in such explicit terms by the victim, and supported by such a cloud of evidence, that it is impossible to believe it to be a fabrication; and the consequences of

the crime which she committed against her sister, and the laws of God and man, are so artlessly and naturally related — even when they bear most hardly upon herself—that the credence of no one who reads it impartially, and with the desire to form an honest judgment, can be withheld from it. But while the charges which she makes against Henry Trevanion, and against herself—as being, after the first false and fatal step, more or less a willing partner of his crime—are to be accepted as coming from the one best qualified to make and to prove them, no such compulsion lies upon the reader to accept the truth of the charges of connivance at, or encouragement of, her offences, which she brings against her mother and sister. That her mother may have neglected to watch over her with the anxiety and constant care that her age and temperament demanded, and that her sister may never have conceived the idea of such wickedness as her husband perpetrated against a child whom he ought to have protected with brotherly if not fatherly care, considering his age and hers, are facts which may be conceded ; but that Mrs. Leigh—a good woman, by all the accounts that have come down to us concerning her—should have wilfully encouraged and laid plans for the seduction of her daughter, or that the sister should have entered, for any purposes of her own, into a plot so diabolical, and so seemingly purposeless—is not to be believed on the evidence of Medora Leigh, or on any other evidence than the confession, which was never made, of the husband and wife themselves. Indeed, Mrs. Leigh, on Medora Leigh's own showing, acted a kindly and a motherly part towards her after her first great transgression became known, and did her best, when her erring daughter had recovered from the illness which that transgression had caused, and all traces of her guilt seemed to be removed, to draw her away from the evil companionship of her sister's husband, and bring her out into society, where she might make purer acquaintances. That under the circumstances she should have been allowed, either by her mother or her sister, to become a second time the inmate of Trevanion's house, and that she should again be permitted to associate with him on any terms whatever, is, to say the least, extraordinary. But, as Colonel Leigh had been carefully kept from the knowledge of his child's guilt, it is possible that some consideration connected with the desirability of not exciting his suspicion, led to an arrangement that, as told by Medora Leigh, appears so wholly objectionable. Colonel Leigh's suspicions, however, appear at last to have been aroused; and, to rescue his infatuated daughter from the clutches of Mr. Trevanion, his only resource—if her statement is to be accepted as the absolute truth—was to take her forcibly from the company of her sister and her sister's husband, and confine her in a private lunatic asylum. Until within a short period previous to the occurrence of this incident, Medora Leigh had always believed Colonel Leigh to be her father—felt kindly towards him, as he did towards her, for she was his favourite child—and wished sincerely to spare him any knowledge of her shame. *But now she was informed, both by her sister and her sister's husband, that Colonel Leigh was not her father.* On what authority, and on what knowledge, real or supposed, did Georgiana Trevanion and her unprincipled husband make this charge against Mrs. Leigh? How could Mrs. Trevanion have known the fact, if it were true? Did her mother tell her? Had she heard it from her father?—for she never asserted, it would appear, that Colonel Leigh was other than her own father, in whatever relation he might stand to the unfortunate Medora. Had she been told of it by any one not in the immediate circle of her own family? Had she got it—say, for instance,—from Lady Byron? And if so, where did Lady Byron get it? These questions admit of no answer to be accepted as a clue out of the entanglement, or as a proof—or as even the shadow of a proof—of the guilt of Mrs. Leigh. That lady never could have told any of her sons or daughters such a story. Colonel Leigh could not have heard of, or believed it, or he would not have continued to live with his wife on any terms, more especially on terms of domestic affection. Lady Byron could not have told the story at that time, as will be shown hereafter in the course of our dissection of Miss Leigh's narrative, and by Lady Byron's account of the separation, first published in 1830. Yet the story, as told to Medora Leigh by her sister and Mr. Trevanion, must have originated with some one. That Mrs. Trevanion should have made such an accusation against her mother, proves her to have been at all events a heartless woman, and a bad daughter—bad to her mother, cruel to her father, as well as to all her brothers and sisters then living —even if the charge were true. That Lady Byron must be absolved from the imputation of having made it, either in 1816 or in 1830, will be evident to all who read the account of the separation, which Lady Byron caused to be privately printed in the latter year and sent to Thomas Moore, then engaged on the "Life of Byron," who published it in an appendix to his work:— unless Lady Byron told the story to Dr. Lushington in 1816, and afterwards confided it to other people, who spread it abroad until it reached the ears of Mrs. Trevanion. In this supposition, all the praise bestowed upon Lady Byron, for her magnanimity in keeping a painful secret, must fall to the ground as baseless and undeserved; and her memory must be charged with a double hypocrisy, in keeping on affectionate terms with Mrs. Leigh, while yet engaged in divulging secrets to that lady's dishonour. Absolving Lady

Byron at this time, as we must do by the combined arguments of a whole chain of strong consecutive evidence, we come upon Mrs. Trevanion as the original propagator, if not the sole author, of the charge which, at the time she made it, seems only to have implicated her mother and some person unknown; for Lord Byron's name does not appear to have been mentioned in the matter to Medora Leigh until about nine years afterwards. That Mrs. Trevanion, in making this accusation against her mother, must have had some strong motive is evident. No one would be so wicked without some overpowering personal object. The object and the motive seem to be not far to seek or difficult to find, though the simple-minded Medora Leigh does not anywhere betray that she had any suspicion of them. Mrs. Trevanion wanted to get rid of her husband—Mr. Trevanion wanted to get rid of his wife; and Mr. Trevanion, who had a certain animal attachment for his wife's sister, which he probably, in his own mind, called by the desecrated name of love, had made up his mind to marry Medora Leigh, if the divorce could be obtained. But if Mr. Trevanion could live in concubinage with his divorced wife's sister, he could not legally marry her. Hence, in all probability, lies the germ of the whole story. It was necessary to make Medora believe that she was not really Georgiana's sister—or, at all events, not the child of Georgiana's father—in order that the unfortunate girl, even at the sacrifice of her mother's good name, might delude herself with the hope that if the divorce were obtained, there would remain no real obstacle to her marriage with her seducer.

Medora Leigh's elopement from the private lunatic asylum, in which her father and mother had placed her to remove her for awhile from the contamination of Mr. Trevanion's company, was afterwards made one of the pleas on which Mrs. Trevanion grounded her suit in the Ecclesiastical Court for a divorce from her husband. Medora Leigh expressly accuses her sister, but not her mother, of having been a party to this elopement before it took place, of having been in collusion with her husband to bring it about, of having surreptitiously conveyed letters to her sewed in her linen when it was delivered from the laundress to the lunatic asylum. These circumstances may or may not be true, but they are at least probable, when it is considered that the suit for the divorce was dismissed, for the all-sufficient reason that there was guilty collusion between the wife and the husband to procure it.

There is no necessity here for any recapitulation of the story of Medora Leigh, or of the facts connected with her long residence in France with Mr. Trevanion, under the names of Mons. and Madame Aubin. While there was a possibility that the divorce might be obtained, Medora Leigh, who had lost all the respect she ever entertained for Mr. Trevanion—if she ever could have entertained any, which is extremely doubtful—and had ceased to feel towards him that poor amount of misplaced affection which had once led her so wofully astray, continued to cohabit with him, and make the best of her painful situation. But when the divorce became hopeless, and marriage with her seducer impossible, she finally made up her mind to terminate the connection. The struggle was a long and a severe one, but she finally, some years after the birth of her daughter Marie, resolved to leave him. And she did so. He was utterly unable, from extreme poverty, to support her or his child, and in this crisis of her sorry fortunes, Miss Leigh appealed to her mother for aid. She had been taught that her supposed father was not her father, and to him she appears to have made no application. Mrs. Leigh—who was most probably unaware of the cruel accusation that her elder daughter had made to her younger one, against herself, Colonel Leigh, and some other person unnamed or unknown—acted as a forgiving mother should have done, wrote to Medora kindly, and promised to allow her a small annual income for her subsistence and that of her child in France. Mrs. Leigh, as before remarked, was always in pecuniary difficulties, and having provided for Medora, as she had done for her other children, out of the money bequeathed to her by Lord Byron, by the Deed of Appointment for £3000, payable at her and Lady Byron's death, found it hard to meet the new claim from Medora which the misconduct of that young lady had brought upon her. She was not regular in the promised payments of the poor pittance, which would perhaps have satisfied Medora, and the feelings of the latter towards her mother became embittered. For this bitterness, however, her sister Georgiana was primarily to blame; for if Medora had believed in her mother's innocence, she would, doubtless, have felt more sympathy for her mother's poverty, and accepted with a more grateful heart whatever her mother might have been able to allow her.

Amid all her errors and failings, and all through the sad story that Medora Leigh tells of herself and others, there runs an undercurrent of pride and highmindedness. She had a keen sense of what was right. And it was her highmindedness that, in her twenty-fifth year, brought her into contact with Lady Byron, and opened out before her, to all appearance, the prospect of a calm if not a happy close to her hitherto turbulent life, in the affection as well as in the powerful patronage of a noble, wealthy, and tender-hearted relative. When she left Mr. Trevanion she made up her mind, whatever might happen otherwise to herself, that the separation should be final. She was as decided and as emphatic on this point as Lady Byron herself had been under very different circumstances. This, however, did not suit the passions, or perhaps the

calculations, of Mr. Trevanion; and it appears incidentally from Medora's narrative, that he continued to persecute her with his addresses, and urge her to return to his protection. Lady Byron, who was now to all appearance made aware for the first time of Medora Leigh's history, was recommended by her friend, Sir Robert Wilmot Horton, to remove the persecutor for awhile from Medora's path, by consigning Trevanion to prison for a debt contracted to Lady Byron in 1826, for a sum of money the possession of which at the time enabled him to marry Georgiana Leigh, and without which sum the marriage could not have taken place. Medora Leigh had been informed by Mr. Trevanion, during their cohabitation and intimacy, of all the circumstances connected with this loan, and knew that all along it had been Trevanion's idea that, though called a loan, it was in reality a gift, and was never to be repaid. When the project of suing Mr. Trevanion for this sum was first broached to Medora Leigh, her mind revolted against it, as treacherous, dishonourable, and unjust. So strongly did she feel upon the subject, that she not only wrote to Lady Byron's solicitors to protest against the wrong, as she considered it to be, but informed Mr. Trevanion of what was intended, in order that he might place himself beyond the reach of any legal proceedings that might be attempted for the recovery of the money. The letter was forwarded by Lady Byron's solicitors to Lady Byron herself, who seems to have been so pleased with the spirit displayed in it, and the generous feeling of justice and honour that it exhibited, even in the case of a man to whom Medora neither owed gratitude nor consideration, that she sought and obtained a personal intimacy with her unhappy niece. The circumstances are told by Miss Leigh with the utmost plainness, and with no attempt to create what, in our day, would be called a "sensation." It was a beautiful vision that opened upon the eyes of the child of sorrow—upon the poor forlorn destitute creature, who had more or less estranged all her natural protectors, and who scorned and loathed any longer to be indebted for miserable bread to the selfish man who had been the means of hurling her from her high and innocent estate, and who preferred want itself to further relief from his hands. Lady Byron took her to her heart, promised to bestow motherly care and tenderness, and lifelong support and bounty, upon her, on the sole condition that her great and true love should be as greatly and truly returned, and that her fullest confidence should be as fully reciprocated. Miss Leigh was surprised at the extent of her good fortune, and, to satisfy her natural wonder at such a sudden as well as bright and consolatory change in her destiny, Lady Byron explained to her how and why it was that she manifested so warm an interest in her welfare. She learned, from Lady Byron's own lips, the secret of the alleged paternity—of which her sister does not seem, from any portion of Miss Leigh's narrative, to have informed her—and was taught to look upon Lord Byron as her father, upon Ada (Lady Lovelace) as her sister, and upon Lady Byron herself as one who was both able and willing to supply to her the place of the real mother who was in no position to do a mother's duty towards her. This was indeed a revelation to one in the lowest depths of misery—to one who seemed as if she were about to perish, alone and unaided, in a world that had no place for her. But here again the question recurs, how did Lady Byron acquire this knowledge; when did she acquire it? and who told her of a fact, if it were a fact, which was so likely to have been known to none but the two people who were co-partners in the sin? If it were Georgiana Trevanion, as may not unreasonably be supposed, who imparted the secret to Lady Byron, we are no further advanced in elucidation of the mystery, and are forced back upon the questions, who told Georgiana Trevanion? how did she become aware of her mother's guilt? or did she invent the story for her own purposes?

It is clear, from Medora Leigh's narrative, that for the first sixteen years of her life she believed that Colonel Leigh was as truly her father as he was the father of Mrs. Trevanion. It is also presumable, if not positively made out, that it was not until her twenty-fifth year that Lord Byron's paternity of herself was revealed to her by Lord Byron's widow—sixteen years after the death of Lord Byron, and twenty-four after his separation from his wife, under circumstances that set all the bitter tongues of that many-headed and scandalous monster, the public, wagging against him with a fury never before equalled in England. That Lady Byron had not, in the year 1830, become the confidante of Georgiana Trevanion, and was not at that time informed by her that Medora Leigh was the daughter of Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh, that she did not and could not know of such an imputation against her husband, will appear from a careful perusal of the little pamphlet of fifteen pages which in that year she caused to be privately printed, which she forwarded to Mr. Thomas Moore, then engaged upon his "Life of Byron," and which that gentleman published, *in extenso*, as an appendix to his work. That Lord Byron had behaved badly to her she explicitly stated; as also that this bad behaviour, in whatever it consisted, was the reason why she left him; though she admits that when she left she would have returned to him, and done her best duty as a wife to him, had it been established, on satisfactory medical evidence, that insanity might be pleaded in extenuation of his offences towards her. Lady Byron said, in that document, "that, with the concurrence of his family" (there was no one who could be designated, at that time, as belonging to his family beyond herself and the in-

fant Ada, if it were not his sister, Miss Leigh)—"she consulted Dr. Baillie, as a friend, on the 8th of January, 1816" (seven days before she quitted him for ever), "respecting this supposed malady" (insanity). "When," adds Lady Byron, "I arrived at Kirkby Mallory, my parents were unacquainted with the existence of any causes likely to destroy my prospects of happiness; and when I communicated to them the opinion which had been formed concerning Lord Byron's state of mind, they were most anxious to promote his restoration by every means in their power. They assured those relations who were with him in London, that 'they would devote their whole care and attention to the alleviation of his malady,' and hoped to make the best arrangements for his comfort, if he could be induced to visit them. With these intentions my mother wrote on the 17th to Lord Byron, inviting him to Kirkby Mallory."

In other words, whatever Lord Byron's faults or crimes were, even if he had committed incest, and Lady Byron knew it at the time—as we must believe she did, if we are to credit Mrs. Stowe—Lord Byron would have been taken to the house of Lady Byron's parents, and was actually invited there two days after the separation, and would have been carefully and affectionately tended by the whole family until his restoration to health.

But the charge of insanity not being provable, Lady Byron would have nothing further to do with her husband:—

"The accounts given me after I left Lord Byron by the persons in constant intercourse with him, added to those doubts which had before transiently occurred to my mind, as to the reality of the alleged disease; and the reports of his medical attendant were far from establishing the existence of anything like lunacy. Under this uncertainty, I deemed it right to communicate to my parents that, if I were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce me to return to him. It therefore appeared expedient, both to them and myself, to consult the ablest advisers. For that object, and also to obtain still further information respecting the appearances which seemed to indicate mental derangement, my mother determined to go to London. She was empowered by me to take legal opinions on a written statement of mine, though I had then reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother.

"Being convinced by the result of these inquiries, and by the tenor of Lord Byron's proceedings, that the notion of insanity was an illusion, I no longer hesitated to authorise such measures as were necessary in order to secure me from ever again being placed in his power."

This narrative of Lady Byron, dated and published in 1830, proves that, whatever may have been the mysterious cause of the separation of 1816, it could not have been incest with Mrs. Leigh; *firstly*, because Lady Byron took her measures in friendly concert with Mrs. Leigh at that time, to ascertain whether or not insanity could be pleaded in extenuation of her husband's errors or crimes against her; and, *secondly*, because, up to the time of Lord Byron's death, in 1824, she continued to maintain the same friendly if not affectionate intimacy with Mrs. Leigh. It also helps to prove that in 1830, fourteen years after the separation, this charge had either not presented itself to her mind, or she had not thought fit to plead it as a justification of her conduct lest it should prove damaging to her dear friend Mrs. Leigh.

If ignorant of such a charge against her husband up to the year 1830, a year before the information was given by Georgiana Trevanion to her sister Medora, that Colonel Leigh was not her father, it is possible that Lady Byron may have heard the charge made against Mrs. Leigh by some one between 1831 and 1840. In the latter year she herself made the charge to Medora, and coupled it with the name of Lord Byron. During this interval of nine years there was no new evidence to be procured. None could come from Lord Byron in his grave, none could come from the much-maligned Mrs. Leigh; none could come from any one, unless it were from Mrs. Trevanion, whose possession of any knowledge of it, if it were true, was mysterious, if not inexplicable, and whose divulgence and propagation of it, if it were false, was malignant, unfilial, and unnatural.

We do not wish to do Mrs. Trevanion injustice; and though she made to Medora Leigh this most cruel accusation against a mother, who always seems to have done a mother's duty towards all her children, it is just possible that Mrs. Trevanion was not the actual inventress of the tale, and that in the apparently lowest deep of this unhappy business there was a lower still. Lord Byron accused Mrs. Charlemont, the former waiting-maid of Lady Byron's mother, and afterwards the governess of Lady Byron in her infancy and youth, and her confidante after marriage, of being the prime source of all the misunderstanding and misery which first caused the breach between the husband and the wife, and as one who afterwards persistently, malevolently, and successfully widened it. Some fearful wrong, at least in Lord Byron's opinion, must have been done by this woman, or he could not have written of her in such scathing words as he employed in his world-renowned "Sketch:"—

Oh! wretch—without a tear—without a thought,
Save joy, above the ruin thou hast wrought—
The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shalt feel far more than thou inflictest now;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain.
May the strong curse of crush'd affections light
Back on thy bosom with reflected blight,

And make thee in thy leprosy of mind
As loathsome to thyself as to mankind!
Till all thy self-thoughts curdle into hate,
Black—as thy will for others would create:
Till thy hard heart be calcined into dust,
And thy soul welter in its hideous crust.
Oh, may thy grave be sleepless as the bed,
The widow'd couch of fire, that thou hast spread!
Then, when thou fain wouldst weary Heaven with prayer,
Look on thine earthly victims—and despair!

Lord Byron may have been wrong to write thus of a woman; it may have been undignified on his part to publish such bitter vituperation; but no one who impartially reads the story of the separation, can disbelieve the fact, that Mrs. Charlemont had much to do with it; and that, if Lord Byron had been really guilty of the crime alleged against him by Mrs. Stowe and Lady Byron, he would not in common prudence have run the risk of exasperating against him, by such a fierce attack as this, a woman who was in Lady Byron's intimate confidence, who knew all her secrets, and who could not but have been aware of this, had the charge been true in itself, or even as much as suspected by Lady Byron at the time which Mrs. Stowe indicates.

Among the many mysteries of a case in which so many women, either heartless and unfeeling, or vicious and abandoned, were in one way or other concerned, the true relation of this particular woman to Lady Byron and her husband is not among the least perplexing. She who did so much mischief prior to the separation, may perhaps have been the person who, long after the separation, first put the idea into the head of Georgiana Leigh, which the latter afterwards endeavoured to turn to her own account, in her dispute with her unworthy husband.

Lady Byron, in the year 1840, and not earlier, however, and from whomsoever she may have become possessed of the story, believed it to be true. There is no positive proof, except in Mrs. Stowe's narrative, that she either believed or knew of it at any previous time. But hearing of it, and believing it, in 1840, she certainly, on the testimony of Medora Leigh, in 1843, acted towards that misguided and repentant young woman in the kindest and most generous manner, and with a Christian charity as admirable as it was unprecedented. But after a short time this singular burst of fiery tenderness cooled down, and the dependent lady, whom she called her "other child," and treated as if she, indeed, were so for the sake of Lord Byron, whose child—though the "child of sin" she considered her to be—became every day of less importance in her sight. In the first warm days of their intercourse, she was everything to her; in the last cold days, she was as nothing. Whether from faults in Medora's character, or whether Lady Byron considered her to be insane, as Colonel Leigh had done nine years previously, and she had once considered her husband to be, she certainly made arrangements for Medora's future mode of life which were not likely to be satisfactory to any high-minded or self-respecting person of either sex. She placed Miss Leigh, as it were, in the custody of two keepers, a French servingwoman and her husband, and paid the money she agreed to allow for her subsistence, not to her, as she ought to have done if Medora were fit to be entrusted with money, but to them, her domestics and underlings, whose society Medora did not require, and ought not to have been subjected to; and who, if keepers and custodians of her person in reality, as Lady Byron seems to have intended, were theoretically her servants. And when Medora, after long struggles, and many entreaties to Lady Byron to be placed in a more satisfactory and honourable position, as the adopted child and niece of a lady of rank and wealth, took the not very heinous step of travelling to England without her gracious permission, to obtain a personal interview with her patroness, Lady Byron dropped the character alike of mother, of aunt, of friend, and of benefactress, and left her unlucky *protégée* to perish.

It is true that Lady Byron did not positively cast Miss Leigh adrift upon the world, but required compliance with three conditions which she imposed upon her acceptance, through Sir George Stephen, her solicitor. But she would not see the young lady when she came unbidden to London, or even read her letters. The conditions were: *first*, an apology for her disobedience in daring to come to London without Lady Byron's permission, and contrary to her orders; *secondly*, her immediate return to the south of France—possibly in the company of the valet and his wife, though this is not stated; and *thirdly*, the surrender of the Deed of Appointment to trustees, for the benefit of the little Marie, the child of Medora and Trevanion. To the two first conditions Miss Leigh consented fully, entirely, almost abjectly. The third she absolutely refused, on the plea that, after what had passed, she had no security, if she should give up the document, that Lady Byron would permanently continue her favour, and the regular payment of the annual sum proposed to be allowed to her. She pleaded that if such calamity as the withdrawal of Lady Byron's favour should unfortunately occur, she would be even without the very poor resource—but still a resource, which was better than none at all—the chance of disposing of her reversionary interest in the sum of £3000, to provide for the immediate wants of the evil day that would then break over her unsheltered head. Lady Byron remained inexorable. Lord Byron, in his famous "Farewell," had accused his wife of being "unforgiving." It was the most serious charge which he brought against her at a time when his heart was full alike of love and affliction, and it is impossible, on reading the latter portion of Medora Leigh's autobiography, not to admit that this defect in

Lady Byron's character—of inexorability, of unforgivingness, or of exaction of undue submission to her sovereign will and pleasure, whatever may be the word which best describes her idiosyncrasy—rendered it very difficult for those in her intimacy to remain intimate with her, and at the same time preserve their self-respect. Thus Lord Byron, it will be seen, was not the only person who had cause to complain of her in this respect, and who was puzzled in his dealings to account for the sudden and apparently causeless hardenings of her heart towards those for whom she had felt or expressed affection. Writing upon this subject after Mrs. Stowe's publication had divided the whole English-speaking world into two separate armies, the friends or the foes of Lord Byron—the friends preponderating as a hundred to one—Mr. William Howitt, who was admitted into the very variable and uncertain atmosphere of Lady Byron's intimacy, describes a character in perfect accordance with the idea that might be conceived of it from Miss Leigh's narrative. "I am sure," says Mr. Howitt, in a letter to the *Daily News*, dated the 2nd of September, 1869, "that Lady Byron was a woman of the most honourable and conscientious intentions, but she was subject to a constitutional idiosyncrasy of a most peculiar kind, which rendered her, when under its influence, absolutely and persistently unjust. I am quite sure from my own observation of her that, when seized by this peculiar condition of the nerves, she was helplessly under its control. Through this the changes in her mood were sudden, and most painful to all about her. I have seen her of an evening in the most amiable, cordial, and sunny humour, full of interest and sympathy; and I have seen her the next morning come down as if she had lain all night not on a feather-bed, but on a glacier—frozen as it were to the very soul, and no efforts on the part of those around her could restore her for the day to a genial social warmth. In such moments she seemed to take sudden and deep impressions against persons and things, which, though the worst might pass away, left a permanent effect. Let me give an instance or two.

"Lady Byron was at the period I speak of deeply interested in the establishment of working schools for the education of children of the labouring classes. She induced Lord Lovelace to erect one at Ockham; she built one on her estate at Kirkby Mallory, in Leicestershire. On one occasion, in one of her most amiable moods, she asked me to lunch with her in town, that we might discuss her plans for this system of education. She promised to arrange that we should not be interrupted for some hours. I went at the time fixed; but, to my consternation, found her in one of her frozen fits. The touch of her hand was like that of death; in her manner there was the silence of the grave. We sat down to luncheon by ourselves, and I endeavoured to break the ice by speaking of incidents of the day. It was in vain. The devil of the North Pole was upon her, and I could only extract icy monosyllables. When we returned to the drawing-room, I sought to interest her in the topic on which we had met, and which she had so truly at heart. It was hopeless. She said she felt unable to go into it, and I was glad to get away.

"Again, she was in great difficulty as to the selection of a master for her working school at Kirkby Mallory. It was necessary for him to unite the very rarely united qualities of a thoroughly practical knowledge of the operations of agriculture and gardening with the education and information of an accomplished schoolmaster. She asked me to try and discover this *rara avis* for her. I knew exactly such a man in Nottinghamshire, who was at the same time thoroughly honourable, trustworthy, and fond of teaching. At her earnest request I prevailed on him to give up his then comfortable position and accept her offer. For a time he was everything in her eyes that a man and a schoolmaster could be. She was continually speaking of him, when we met, in the most cordial terms. But in the course, as I remember, of two or three years, the poor fellow wrote to me in the utmost distress, saying that Lady Byron, without the slightest intimation of being in any way dissatisfied with him, or with his management of the school, had given him notice to quit. He had entreated her to let him know what was the cause of this sudden dismissal. She refused to give any, and he entreated me to write to her and endeavour to remove her displeasure, or to ascertain its cause. I felt, from what I had seen of Lady Byron before, that it was useless. I wrote to him, '*Remember Lord Byron!* If Lady Byron has taken it into her head that you shall go, nothing will turn her. Go you must, and you had better prepare for it.' And the poor fellow, with a family of about five children, and his old situation filled up, turned out into the world to comparative ruin."

If Mr. Howitt had known the history of Medora Leigh, and been as fully acquainted as the reader now is with the manner in which she was first patronised and then neglected by Lady Byron, he could not have made a more accurate sketch of Lady Byron's character—a woman whose first impulses appear to have been always warm, good, and generous; whose second impulses and thoughts were generally cold and unjust, who was not to be depended upon for her love, but who was stern, unyielding, and unforgiving in her hate, and who, if she had sufficient reason for her love in any case, does not ever appear to have had sufficient reasons for her hatred, either of her husband or of anybody else.

One peculiarity of Lord Byron's character, which rendered him agreeable to those who could understand him, and which was the occasion of much mutual mirth in the social circles which he

adorned, was his habit of jesting at his own expense. He was what the French call a *mauvais farceur*, and made such ponderous jokes that it required a *farceur* like himself to appreciate them. He loved to mystify stupid people, and often did so very effectively, to his own great amusement, while the fun lasted, and much to the disgust of the victims of his humour, when they discovered how their simplicity had been played upon. He was also, as the French say, "*le fanfaron des vices qu'il n'avait pas*," and with the gravest face accused himself of crimes too great to be committed, with his tongue in his cheek all the time, and laughing, with inner laughter, at the sensation which he created, and the maundering good faith of the listening believer. Lady Byron seems to have been sometimes the victim of these pranks of her lord, and in the innocence—worthy of a harder name—of her nature, accepted as truths the monstrous creations of his morbid, though sportive, fancy. And she, on her part, resembled, while she disresembled, her lord; for if he was a trumpeter of his imaginary vices for purposes of mystification, she was the *fanfaron*, or trumpeter of virtues on her own part, which were, perhaps, equally imaginary. It is always unsafe to jest with apathetic, soporific, unsympathetic people, male or female, who have no sense of wit, fun, or humour, or quick appreciation of the play of words, and the flashing phosphorescent lights of a double meaning. It is quite evident, from all the course of her history, that Lady Byron, excellent woman as she was, was not one to understand a jest without explanation, or by any means a person to be jested with.

The literary evidence, which evidently weighs much in the mind of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and which she has principally gathered from the two dramatic poems, "Manfred" and "Cain," may possibly, after long and solitary brooding upon her woes, have had its influences on Lady Byron's mind also, if it did not first of all lead her thoughts towards the suspicion that coloured the later years of her life. But evidence of this kind is not to be accepted as proof against Lord Byron any more that passages descriptive of murder in Shakespeare's plays could be accepted against Shakespeare if any one charged him with that crime. But if Mrs. Stowe and Lady Byron were fair judges of the value of literary evidence, they might have gone to poems that were not fictions and not intended for fictions, but were the passionate expression of fact and reality, and therein, if they reverently studied them, they would find much to prove that Byron's love for his sister was pure and ennobling. Whether in his "Domestic Poems," as published and intended for publication, or in his private communications to his literary and personal friends, which were never intended for the public eye, he always speaks of his sister with the highest respect. To his mind she is all goodness, all amiability, all excellence, all purity, the incarnation of all the noblest virtues and most winsome graces of her sex. It is impossible not to see that he not only loves but honours her, and it is just as impossible for any one not led astray by passionate prejudice, like Lady Byron in her later years, and Mrs. Beecher Stowe, who took her words for gospel, not to see that no man, however base or hypocritical, could have truly honoured a woman who had been his partner in a sin so hateful.

RECAPITULATION.

Let us endeavour to sum up the history of Lady Byron's accusations against Lord Byron in its several epochs chronologically.

In the year 1816 she parted from her husband, alleging to her father and mother, and to Dr. Lushington and Sir Samuel Romilly, sixteen reasons in justification for the step she had taken. Neither her father nor her mother, nor Dr. Lushington nor Sir Samuel Romilly—though they all agreed that these charges were very serious—thought they were such, individually or collectively, as might not be condoned. When she discovered that the doctors did not consider her husband to be insane, then, and not till then, she told Dr. Lushington of a seventeenth cause of separation, of which she had made no mention to her parents. Upon this seventeenth accusation, whatever it was, Dr. Lushington thought reconciliation and return to her husband impossible; and declared that, if it were attempted, he would neither recommend nor have anything to do with promoting it. But if this seventeenth charge was one of incest with Mrs. Leigh, Lady Byron did not break off her friendly, confidential, and affectionate intercourse with that lady, but treated her as a sister, and implored her for the continuance of her love and goodwill. This is extraordinary on the part of Lady Byron, to say the least of it.

In the year 1818, two years after the separation, she wrote to her friend, Lady Anne Barnard, a letter in which she laid the whole blame of her separation upon her husband, and would take none to herself, stating "that, though *he* would not suffer her to remain his wife, he could not prevent her from continuing his friend." She represented her affection for Lord Byron as "hopeless and unrequited," and asserted that "as long as she lived her chief struggle would be not to remember him too kindly. It was not for her to speak ill of his heart in general; it was sufficient that to *her* it was hard and impenetrable, and that hers must have been broken before his could be touched." All these tender confessions to her friend, Lady Anne, are doubtless the true exposition of her feelings in 1818, while Lord Byron still lived; but how are they reconcileable with any knowledge of such a crime as incest, committed by her husband before and during the period of his marriage?

In the year 1824, shortly before her husband's death, Lady Byron wrote to Lord Byron, in conjunction with Mrs. Leigh, a letter descriptive of the state of health of her daughter Ada; a fact which does not look as if she knew Mrs. Leigh to be guilty of the crime imputed to her. And if Mrs. Leigh were not guilty, Lord Byron had no other sister, and could not be guilty of that particular crime, however guilty he might be of some other.

In the year 1830, Lady Byron wrote a history of the separation, and sent it to Mr. Thomas Moore. We have already quoted enough from it to show that in her mind at that time the charge against her husband could not have been that of incest.

In the year 1840, Lady Byron adopted Elizabeth Medora Leigh, because she either knew, or supposed she knew, the fact at that time, or had been told by some one, and believed the story, that that young lady was Lord Byron's daughter, and that Mrs. Leigh was her mother.

In the year 1856, Lady Byron told Mrs. Stowe that she knew and was convinced of Lord Byron's guilt with his sister prior to the separation in 1816, though she told Mrs. Stowe, at the same time, that even with this dreadful knowledge in her heart, and though Lord Byron had endeavoured not only to corrupt her morals, but to shake her religious faith, and make her the cloak, and, in a manner, the accomplice of his adulterous and incestuous intrigue, she loved Lord Byron so well, that she envied the dog that was allowed to remain with him, and would have been glad, even at the moment she was leaving him for ever, "if she could have been allowed to remain and watch over him." Truly this is an incomprehensible story, and the greatest of all the Byron mysteries.

Up to the time of the publication of this charge by Mrs. Stowe in 1869, the greatest tenderness had been exhibited towards Lady Byron—living and after her death—by all writers and commentators upon Lord Byron's life and poetry, and by all who still mentioned her name in connection with her unhappy marriage. Every one respected her character and spared her feelings. No one accused her of any breach of virtue or propriety. She was doubtless considered hard and cold, but nothing worse was said of her; and if any particular feeling was expressed towards her, it was that of sorrow that she and Lord Byron had not been able to pass through life amicably and happily together. There was, it is true, a vague idea, felt rather than expressed, that she was doing great injustice to Lord Byron's memory by her mysterious silence—a silence more cruel than any direct and plain accusation could have been. But when at last this silence was broken, first by her confidences to Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and, secondly, by the publication of those confidences by the latter, no greater charge was even then, and on that amount of provocation, brought against her than that she was the victim of a strange hallucination, of which the germ was to be sought in a peculiar jealousy—jealousy of Lord Byron while he lived, born of the days when he perhaps gave her too much cause for such a feeling, and when strove with herself, as she told Lady Anne Barnard, not to remember him too kindly; and jealousy after his death because, among the poems that he had bequeathed as an undying legacy to the literature of his country, there were none by any means so beautiful and touching addressed to his wife as those which he addressed to his sister, with the exception of the pathetic "Farewell," in which he had depicted her as "unforgiving."

But the forbearance shown towards Lady Byron by the whole world of English literature, was not shown by her towards her husband's memory when she made her revelations to Mrs. Stowe, and authorised their publication. The provocation she alleged for taking Mrs. Stowe into her confidence was altogether unworthy of a sensible woman—namely, the injurious popularity about to be given to his poems by means of the cheap editions that were thrown upon the literary market. This plea, if honestly pleaded in justification of her conduct, can only be admitted as a proof of the jealous monomania which possessed her.* Neither was the provocation alleged by Mrs. Stowe as a justification for giving Lady Byron's confidences to the world, a whit less unworthy—for she expressly stated that, had it not been for the praises bestowed upon Lord Byron in Madame Guiccioli's book, she would have held her peace—and that, had the "mistress" (Guiccioli) not proved to be the bane, she (Mrs. Stowe) would not have thought it incumbent upon her to act the part of the antidote. Foolish and undignified conduct on the part of both ladies if the charge against Lord Byron's memory were true—cruel beyond expression if it were false!

It has hitherto been taken for granted—by all who have written or spoken on the subject—that Dr. Lushington, who still lives, could clear up the Byron mystery if he would. We think that questions of professional secrecy, or etiquette, or punctilio, ought no longer to prevent him from telling what he knows. The admirers of Lord Byron's genius, all who desire that the great names of our literature should be morally pure, need have no alarm for any revelations that it may be in the power of Dr. Lushington to make. Either Lady Byron, in 1816, confided to him her seventeenth

* Miss Harriet Martineau, as strong an admirer of Lady Byron as Mrs. Beecher Stowe, gives a very different account of her ladyship's appreciation of her husband's genius. In an obituary notice of Lady Byron she says: "She loved him [Lord Byron] to the last, with a love which it was not in his power to destroy. *She gloried in his fame: and she would not interfere between him and the public who adored him, any more than she would admit the public to judge between him and her.*"

charge against her husband—that charge being the charge of incest—or she did not. If she did not, Dr. Lushington ought, at the all-but-twelfth hour of his long and honourable life, when he has still the means of making his voice heard, to declare the fact, and vindicate, not only the memory of Mrs. Leigh and Lord Byron, but that of Lady Byron—and rescue her from the charge of hypocritically keeping up intimate and affectionate relations with a woman whom she believed to be guilty of so foul a crime. If Lady Byron did, in truth, make that particular charge against her husband, let the fact be stated by Dr. Lushington—and it will be accepted by the world for what it is worth, and for nothing more. It will be an *ex parte* accusation made against a man secretly behind his back; and, though possibly made in good faith, and with a conviction of its truth on the part of the accuser, the charge may have had no other foundation than the monomaniacal delusions nurtured in the brain of a proud and a jealous woman, married to a husband whom she could not wholly understand; and the charge would rest wholly upon her evidence. There could be no other evidence, unless it could be found in the written confession of both the incriminated parties, which no one supposes or ever has hinted to exist.

Whether Lady Byron did or did not make the charge in 1816, whether Dr. Lushington will or will not divulge what he knows relating to that year, we are still thrown upon Mrs. Trevanion as having made a charge of adultery against her mother in 1831 to a sister who, till 1831, had no suspicion of illegitimate parentage, and upon Lady Byron as having made to Medora Leigh the double charge of incest and adultery against her husband in 1840. All these charges rest upon the testimony of women who could not by any possibility adduce any proof of their assertions, and whose unsupported evidence would not be accepted as conclusive of the guilt of the accused in any court of justice in the world. The witnesses are, none of them, clean-handed or clean-minded, however clear-headed they may have been, least of all Mrs. Trevanion; and certainly not Medora Leigh, who accepts the charge without making it, and rests her belief entirely upon the information of her sister and of Lady Byron. Even Lady Byron herself, though perfectly clean-handed, is not at all clear-minded; and has fallen into so many contradictions and concealments, and made mingled avowals and disavowals, as to render her a very untrustworthy witness.

If Lord Byron, alive and in the flesh, were on trial before any earthly tribunal for the crime charged against him—if Lady Byron was, as she is now, the only direct witness against him, and Mrs. Trevanion the only direct witness against Mrs. Leigh, and the one or both could be submitted to examination and to cross-examination on the various remarkable discrepancies of the story, as affecting one or the other—would any judge sum up the evidence against these persons, or any jury convict either? If they were tried in the Court of Honour, there would be no case. If they were tried in England, the verdict would be, Not Guilty. If they were tried in Scotland, the verdict would be, Not Proven. And more than this, in the case of Lord Byron, shall he not be triumphantly acquitted in the great Court of Conscience? and shall not the voice of Calumny against him be hushed for ever?

The living prisoner arraigned for a crime even smaller than the one alleged against Lord Byron—aye, for the smallest of crimes to which any legal penalty is attached—can speak for himself, or by the mouth of his counsel, and if there be any doubt in his case, is allowed by the merciful wisdom of our law to claim and obtain for the behoof of his innocence all the benefit of any and every sad doubt that may have been excited in the minds of those upon whom the decision and the judgment are thrown. If this be so with the living, however obscure and unworthy they may be, shall not the illustrious dead, arraigned in their graves, be allowed the same poor privilege?

PART IV.

APPENDIX.

CONVERSATIONS WITH LORD BYRON IN GREECE IN 1823.

PART IV.

CONVERSATIONS WITH LORD BYRON.

[Though the following reminiscences of an intercourse of some days with Lord Byron in Greece, in the year 1823, have little or no bearing on the subject discussed in the three preceding parts of this volume—except in so far as they confirm all the previous accounts of persons who associated with the poet during the period of his self-imposed exile, after his separation from his wife until his death in 1824, which agreed in stating that he always expressed his utter ignorance of and incapacity to understand the charge or charges on which Lady Byron justified her flight from his protection—they are, nevertheless, interesting in themselves. The circumstance of an acquaintanceship between Lord Byron and the gentleman who afterwards acted on behalf of Medora Leigh, having been formed twenty years previous to his connection with Miss Leigh's story, is somewhat remarkable. The narrator made notes of his conversations with Lord Byron, began to write them out after his return to England, finally laid the notes aside, and only completed them, by request, to form part of this volume.]

A MAN must be a little weak who thinks he can communicate anything new regarding the personal character of Lord Byron, or even add much to the store of information upon which the world has formed, and posterity will form, its opinion of him. Still, one who has had the good fortune to have had "conversations" with him, may take some credit for self-denial in having kept the fact to himself for many years; while, during almost every month for ten or twelve years after his lordship's death, the public was favoured with some passages of his everyday life, from the pens of numerous individuals, who had, in greater or less degrees of intimacy, associated with him. Having passed five days in the great poet's company, I beg to offer a condensed report of his conversations during that time, drawn from a memory upon which, in this remarkable instance, I can rely with as much confidence as upon written memoranda.

It was in the Island of Ithaca, in the month of August, 1823, that I was shown into the dining-room of the Resident Governor, where Lord Byron, Count Gamba, Dr. Bruno, Mr. Trelawney, and Mr. Hamilton Brown, were seated after dinner, with some of the English officers and principal inhabitants of the place. I had been informed of Lord Byron's presence, but had no means of finding him out, except by recollection of his portraits; and I am not ashamed to confess that I was puzzled, in my examination of the various countenances before me, where to fix upon "the man." I at one time almost settled upon Trelawney, from the interest which he seemed to take in the schooner in which I had just arrived; but on ascending to the drawing-room, I was most agreeably undeceived by finding myself close to the side of the great object of my curiosity, and engaged in easy conversation with him, without presentation or introduction of any kind.

He was handling and remarking upon the books in some small open shelves, and fairly spoke to me in such a manner that not to have replied would have been boorish. "'Pope's Homer's Odyssey'—hum!—that is well placed here, undoubtedly;—'Hume's Essays';—'Tales of My Landlord';—there you are, Watty! Are you recently from England, sir?" I answered that I had not been there for two years. "Then you can bring us no news of the Greek Committee? Here we are all waiting orders, and no orders seem likely to come. Ha! ha!" The conversation continued in this desultory flying strain for some minutes; but on a footing of such apparent familiarity, that more than one person in the room conceived, as I afterwards learnt, that his lordship had had some previous knowledge of me. This was so completely the opposite of what I had always heard of his inaccessibility, his hauteur, and repulsiveness (particularly towards the "travelling English"), that I believe my faculties were visibly affected by my amazement. By degrees I recovered my self-possession, and learnt, from his own lips, that he felt considerably annoyed at some proceedings of the Greek Committee; that his undertaking had more the character of a speculative adventure, in favour of what he conceived to be a glorious principle, than any admiration or enthusiasm for the individual cause.

"I have not changed my opinion of the Greeks," he said. "I know them as well as most people" (a favourite phrase), "but we must not look always too closely at the men who are to benefit by our exertions in a good cause, or God knows we shall seldom do much good in this world. There is Trelawney thinks he has fallen in with an angel in Prince Mavrocordato, and little Bruno would willingly sacrifice his life for the *cause*, as he calls it. I must say he has shown some sincerity in his devotion, in consenting to

join it for the little matter he makes of me." I ventured to say that, in all probability, the being joined with him in any cause was inducement enough for any man of moderate pretensions. He noticed the compliment only by an indifferent smile. "I find but one opinion," he continued, "among all people whom I have met since I came here—that no good is to be done for these rascally Greeks; that I am sure to be deceived, disgusted, and all the rest of it. It may be so; but it is chiefly to satisfy myself upon these very points that I am going. I go prepared for any thing, expecting a deal of roguery and imposition, but hoping to do some good."

"Have you read any of the late publications on Greece?" I asked.

"I never read any accounts of a country to which I can myself go," said he. "The Committee have sent me some of their 'Crown and Anchor' reports, but I can make nothing of them."

I was known to Captain Blaquiere, and I had a few days before met him in Corfu, and received what was then the latest information on Greek affairs. This afforded me some pretence for being in the position, which I could not help feeling was a false one. I was just detailing what I knew, when I happily discovered that I was well acquainted with one of his lordship's party; and upon recognition he did me the kindness to introduce me formally to him, as his very good friend and ally. This made not the slightest difference, except in relieving me of all awkwardness of feeling, and the conversation continued in the same familiar flow. To my increased amazement, he led it to his works, to Lady Byron, and to his daughter. The former was suggested by a volume of "Childe Harold" which was on the table; it was the ugly square little German edition, and I made free to characterise it as execrable. He turned over the leaves, and said; "Yes, it was very bad; but it was better than one he had seen in French prose in Switzerland. I know not what my friend Mr. Murray will say to it all. Kinnaird writes to me that he is wroth about many things; let them do what they like with the book—they have been abusive enough of the author. 'The Quarterly' is trying to make amends, however, and 'Blackwood's' people will suffer none to attack me but themselves. Milman was, I believe, at the bottom of the personalities, because—" [here he made a statement regarding that gentleman which, as I do not believe, I cannot put down]; "but they all sink before an American reviewer, who describes me as a kind of fiend, and says that the deformities of my mind are only to be equalled by those of my body; it is well that any one can see them, at least." Our hostess, Mrs. K., advanced to us about this moment, and his lordship continued, smiling: "Does not your Gordon blood rise at such abuse of a clansman? The gallant Gordons 'bruik nae slight.' Are you true to your name, Mrs. K.?" The lady was loud in her reprobation of the atrocious abuse that had recently been heaped upon the noble lord, and joined in his assumed clannish regard for their mutual name. "Lady Byron and you would agree," he said, laughing, "though I could not, you are thinking; you may *say* so, I assure you. I dare say it will turn out that I have been terribly in the wrong, *but I always want to know what I did.*" I had not courage to touch upon this delicate topic, and Mrs. K. seemed to wish it passed over till a less public occasion. He spoke of "Ada" exactly as any parent might have done of a beloved absent child, and betrayed not the slightest confusion, or consciousness of a sore subject, throughout the whole conversation.

I now learnt from him that he had arrived in the island from Cephalonia only that morning, and that it was his purpose (as it was mine) to visit its antiquities and localities. A ride to the Fountain of Arethusa had been planned for the next day, and I had the happiness of being invited to join it. Pope's "Homer" was taken up for a description of the place, and it led to the following remarks:—"Yes, the very best translation that ever was, or ever will be; there is nothing like it in the world, be assured. It is quite delightful to find Pope's character coming round again; I forgive Gifford everything for that. Puritan as he is, he has too much good sense not to know that, even if all the lies about Pope were truths, his character is one of the best among literary men. There is nobody now like him, except Watty, and he is as nearly faultless as ever human being was."

After what has already been repeatedly published of Lord Byron's opinion of Sir Walter Scott and the "Waverley Novels" it would be a waste of time to specify what was said by him on these subjects to the present writer. The greater part of it, and nearly in the same words, appeared in Captain Medwin's, Lady Blessington's and other journals, which need no support or confirmation from any one. I therefore omit what passed between us on these topics, as already published, and well known through other channels. One statement I do not recollect to have seen noted, and that was his intention, expressed and implied, more than once, of paying a visit to Sir Walter in the then ensuing spring.

The remainder of the evening was passed in arranging the plan of proceeding on the morrow's excursion, in the course of which his lordship occasionally interjected a facetious remark of some general nature; but in such fascinating tones, and with such a degree of amiability and familiarity, that, of all the libels of which I well knew the public press to be guilty, that of describing Lord Byron as inaccessible, morose, and repulsive in manner and language, seemed to me the most false and atrocious. I found I was to be accommodated for the night under the same roof

with his lordship, and I retired, satisfied, in my own mind, that favouring chance had that day made me the intimate (almost confidential) friend of the greatest literary man of modern times.

The next morning, about 9 o'clock, the party for the Fountain of Arethusa assembled in the parlour of Captain K.; but Lord Byron was missing. Trelawney, who had slept in the room adjoining his lordship's, told us that he feared he had been ill during the night, but that he had gone out in a boat very early in the morning. At this moment I happened to be standing at the window, and saw the object of our anxiety in the act of landing on the beach, about ten or a dozen yards from the house, to which he walked slowly up. I never saw and could not conceive the possibility of such a change in the appearance of a human being as had taken place since the previous night. He looked like a man under sentence of death, or returning from the funeral of all that he held dear on earth. His person seemed shrunk, his face was pale, and his eyes languid and fixed on the ground. He was leaning upon a stick, and had changed his dark camlet-caped surtout of the preceding evening for a nankeen jacket, embroidered like a hussar's—an attempt at dandyism, or dash, to which the look and demeanour of the wearer formed a sad contrast. On entering the room, his lordship made the usual salutations; and, after some preliminary arrangements, the party moved off on horses and mules to the place of destination for the day.

I was so struck with the difference of appearance in Lord Byron, that the determination to which I had come, to try to monopolise him, if possible, to myself, without regard to appearances or *bienséance*, almost entirely gave way under the terror of a freezing repulse. I advanced to him under the influence of this feeling, but I had scarcely received his answer, when all uneasiness about my reception vanished, and I stuck as close to him as the road permitted our animals to go. His voice sounded timidly and quiveringly at first; but as the conversation proceeded, it became steady and firm. The beautiful country in which we were travelling naturally formed a prominent topic, as well as the character of the people and of the Government. Of the latter I found him (to my amazement) an admirer. "There is a deal of fine stuff about that old Maitland," he said; "he knows the Greeks well. Do you know if it be true that he ordered one of their brigs to be blown out of the water if she stayed ten minutes longer in Corfu Roads?" I happened to know, and told him that it was true. "Well, of all follies, that of daring to say what one cannot dare to do is the least to be pitied. Do you think Sir Tom would have really executed his threat?" I told his lordship that I believed he certainly would, and that this knowledge of his being in earnest in everything he said was the cause not only of the quiet termination of that affair, but of the order and subordination of the whole of the countries under his government.

The conversation again insensibly reverted to Sir Walter Scott, and Lord Byron repeated to me the anecdote of the interview in Murray's shop, as conclusive evidence of his being the author of the "Waverley Novels." He was a little but not durably staggered by the equally well-known anecdote of Sir Walter having, with some solemnity, denied the authorship to Mr. Wilson Croker, in the presence of George IV., the Duke of York, and the late Lord Canterbury. He agreed that an author wishing to conceal his authorship had a right to give *any answer whatever* that succeeded in convincing an inquirer that he was wrong in his suppositions.

When we came within sight of the object of our excursion, there happened to be an old shepherd in the act of coming down from the fountain. His lordship at once fixed upon him for Eumæus, and invited him back with us to "fill up the picture." Having drunk of the fountain, and eaten of our less classical repast of cold fowls, &c., his lordship again became lively and full of pleasant conceits. To detail the conversation (which was general, and varied as the individuals that partook of it) is now impossible, and certainly not desirable if it were possible. I wish to observe, however, that on this and one very similar occasion, it was very unlike the kind of conversation which Lord Byron is described as holding with various individuals who have written about him. Still more unlike was it to what one would have *supposed* his conversation to be; it was exactly that of nine-tenths of the cultivated class of English gentlemen, careless and unconscious of everything but the present moment. Lord Byron ceased to be more than one of the party, and stood some sharp jokes, practical and verbal, with more good-nature than would have done many of the ciphers whom one is doomed to tolerate in society.

We returned as we went, but no opportunity presented itself of introducing any subject of interest beyond that of the place and time. His lordship seemed quite restored by the excursion, and in the evening came to the Resident's, bearing himself towards everybody in the same easy, gentlemanly way that rendered him the delight and ornament of every society in which he chose to unbend himself.

The Resident was as absolute a monarch as Ulysses, and I dare say much more hospitable and obliging. He found quarters for the whole Anglo-Italian party, in the best houses of the town, and received them on the following morning at the most luxurious of breakfasts, consisting, among other native productions, of fresh-gathered grapes, just ripened, but which were pronounced of some danger to be eaten, as not having had the "first rain." This is worthy of

note, as having been apparently a ground of their being taken by Lord Byron in preference to the riper and safer figs and nectarines; but he deemed it a fair reason for an apology to the worthy doctor of the 8th Regiment (Dr. Scott), who had cautioned the company against the fruit.

"I take them, doctor," said his lordship, "as I take other prohibited things—in order to accustom myself to any and all things that a man may be compelled to take where I am going—in the same way that I abstain from all superfluities, even salt to my eggs, or butter to my bread; and I take tea, Mrs. Knox, without sugar or cream. But tea itself is, really, the most superfluous of superfluities, though I am never without it."

I heard these observations as they were made to Dr. Scott, next to whom I was sitting, towards the end of the table; but I could not hear the animated conversation that was going on between his lordship and Mrs. Knox, beyond the occasional mention of "Penelope," and, when one of her children came in to her, "Telemachus,"—names too obviously *àpropos* of the place and persons to be omitted in any incidental conversation in Ithaca.

The excursion to the "School of Homer" (why so called nobody seemed to know) was to be made by water; and the party of the preceding day, except the lady, embarked in an elegant country boat with four rowers, and sundry packages and jars of eatables and drinkables. As soon as we were seated under the awning—Lord Byron in the centre seat, with his face to the stern—Trelawney took charge of the tiller. The other passengers being seated on the sides, the usual small flying general conversation began. Lord Byron seemed in a mood calculated to make the company think he meant something more formal than ordinary talk. Of course there could not be anything said in the nature of a dialogue, which, to be honest, was the kind of conversation that I had at heart. He began by informing us that he had just been reading, with renewed pleasure, David Hume's Essays. He considered Hume to be by far the most profound thinker and clearest reasoner of the many philosophers and metaphysicians of the last century. "There is," said he, "no refuting him, and for simplicity and clearness of style he is unmatched, and is utterly unanswerable." He referred particularly to the Essay on Miracles. It was remarked to him, that it had nevertheless been specifically answered, and, some people thought, refuted, by a Presbyterian divine, Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen. I could not hear whether his lordship knew of the author, but the remark did not affect his opinion; it merely turned the conversation to Aberdeen and "poor John Scott," the most promising and most unfortunate literary man of the day, whom he knew well, and who, said he, knew him (Lord Byron) as a schoolboy. Scotland, Walter Scott (or, as his lordship always called him), "Watty," the "Waverley Novels," the "Rejected Addresses," and the English aristocracy (which he reviled most bitterly), were the prominent objects of nearly an hour's conversation. It was varied, towards the end of the voyage, in this original fashion: "But come, gentlemen, we must have some inspiration. Here Tita, l'Hippocrena!"

This brought from the bows of the boat a huge Venetian gondolier, with a musket slung diagonally across his back, a stone jar of two gallons of what turned out to be English gin, another porous one of water, and a quart pitcher, into which the gondolier poured the spirit, and laid the whole, with two or three large tumblers, at the feet of his expectant lord, who quickly uncorked the jar, and began to pour its contents into the smaller vessel.

"Now, gentlemen, drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring; it is the true poetic source. I'm a rogue if I have drunk to-day. Come" (handing tumblers round to us), "this is the way;" and he nearly half-filled a tumbler, and then poured from the height of his arm out of the water-jar, till the tumbler sparkled in the sun like soda-water, and drunk it off while effervescing, glorious ginswizzle, a most tempting beverage, of which every one on board took his share, munching after it a biscuit out of a huge tin-case of them. This certainly exhilarated us till we landed within some fifty or sixty yards of the house to which we were directed.

On our way we learned that the Regent of the island—that is, the native governor, as Captain Knox was the protecting Power's Governor (viceroy over the king!)—had forwarded the materials of a substantial feast to the occupant (his brother); for the "nobili Inglesi," who were to honour his premises. In mentioning this act of the Regent to Lord Byron, his remark was a repetition of the satirical line in the imitation address of the poet Fitzgerald, "God bless the Regent!" and as I mentioned the relationship to our approaching host, he added, with a laugh, "and the Duke of York!"

On entering the mansion, we were received by the whole family, commencing with the mother of the princes—a venerable lady of at least seventy, dressed in pure Greek costume, to whom Lord Byron went up, with some formality, and, with a slight bend of the knee, took her hand, and kissed it reverently. We then moved into the adjoining "sala," or saloon, where there was a profusion of English comestibles, in the shape of cold sirloin of beef, fowls, ham, &c., to which we did such honour as a sea-appetite generally produces. It was rather distressing that not one of the entertainers touched any of these luxuries, it being the Greek Second or Panagia Lent, but fed entirely on some cold fish fried in oil, and

green salad, of which last Lord Byron, in adherence to his rule of accustoming himself to eat anything eatable, partook, though with an obvious effort—as well as of the various wines that were on the table, particularly Ithaca, which is exactly port as made and drunk in the country of its growth.

I was not antiquary enough to know to what object of antiquity our visit was made, but I saw Lord Byron in earnest conversation with a very antique old Greek monk in full clerical habit. He was a bishop, sitting on a stone of the ruined wall close by, and he turned out to be the "*Esprit fort*" mentioned in a note at the end of the second canto of "Childe Harold"—a freethinker, at least a freespeaker, when he called the sacrifice of the Mass "*una Coglioneria.*"

When we embarked, on our return to Vathi, Lord Byron seemed moody and sullen, but brightened up as he saw a ripple on the water, a mast and sail raised in the cutter, and Trelawney seated in the stern with the tiller in hand. In a few minutes we were scudding, gunwale under, in a position infinitely more beautiful than agreeable to landsmen, and Lord Byron obviously enjoying the not improbable idea of a swim for life. His motions as he sat tended to increase the impulse of the breeze, and tended also to sway the boat to leeward. "I don't know," he said, "if you all swim, gentlemen; but if you do, you will have fifty fathoms of blue water to support you; and if you do not, you will have it over you. But as you may not all be prepared, starboard, Trelawney—bring her up. There! she is trim; and now let us have a glass of grog after the gale. *Tita, i fiaschi!*" This was followed by a reproduction of the gin-and-water jars, and a round of the immortal swizzle. To my very great surprise, it was new to the company that the liquor which they were now enjoying was the product of Scotland, in the shape of what is called "low-wines," or semi-distilled whisky—chiefly from the distillery of mine ancient friend, James Haig, of Lochrin; but the communication seemed to gratify the noble drinker, and led to the recitation by one of the company, in pure lowland Scotch, of Burns's Petition to the House of Commons in behalf of the national liquor. The last stanza, beginning,

> "Scotland, my auld respeckit mither,"

very much pleased Lord Byron, who said that he too was more than half a Scotchman.

The conversation again turned on the "Waverley Novels," and on this occasion Lord Byron spoke of "The Bride of Lammermuir," and cited the passage where the mother of the cooper's wife tells her husband (the cooper) that she "kent naething aboot what he might do to his wife; but the deil a finger shall ye lay on my dochter, and *that ye may foond upon.*" Shortly afterwards, the conversation having turned upon poetry, his lordship mentioned the famous ode on the death of Sir John Moore as the finest piece of poetry in any language. He recited some lines of it. One of the company, with more presumption than wisdom, took him up, as his memory seemed to lag, by filling in the line:

> "And he looked like a warrior taking his rest,
> With his martial cloak around him."

Lord Byron, with a look at the interloper that spoke as if death were in it, and no death was sufficiently cruel for him, shouted, "'He *lay*'—'he *lay* like a warrior,' not 'he *looked.*'" The pretender was struck dumb, but, with reference to his lordship's laudation of the piece, he ventured half to whisper that the "Gladiator" was superior to it, as it is to any poetical picture ever painted in words. The reply was a benign look, and a flattering recognition, by a little applausive tapping of his tobacco-box on the board on which he sat.

On arriving at Vathi, we repaired to our several rooms in the worthy citizens' houses where we were billeted, to read and meditate, and write and converse, as we might meet, indoors or out; and much profound lucubration took place among us, on the characteristics and disposition of the very eminent personage with whom we were for the time associated. Dr. Scott, the assistant-surgeon of the 8th Foot, who had heard of, though he may not have witnessed, any of the peculiarities of the great poet, accounted for them, and even for the sublimities of his poetry, by an abnormal construction or chronic derangement of the digestive organs—a theory which experience and observation of other people than poets afford many reasons to support:

> "Is it not strange now—ten times strange—to think,
> And is it not enough one's faith to shatter,
> That right or wrong direction of a drink,
> A *plus* or *minus* of a yellow matter,
> One half the world should elevate or sink
> To bliss or woe (most commonly the latter)—
> That human happiness is well-formed chyle,
> And human misery redundant bile!"

The next morning the accounts we heard of Lord Byron were contradictory: Trelawney, who slept in the next room to him, stating that he had been writing the greater part of the night, and he alleged it was the sixteenth canto of "Don Juan;" and Dr. Bruno, who visited him at intervals, and was many hours in personal attendance at his bedside, asserting that he had been seriously ill, and had been saved only by those "*benedette pillule*" (blessed pills), which so often had had that effect. His lordship again appeared rowing in from his bath at the Lazzaretto, a course of proceeding (bathing and boating) which caused Dr. Bruno to wring his hands and tear his hair with alarm and vexation.

It was however the day fixed for our return to Cephalonia, and, having gladly assented to the proposition to join the suite, we all mounted ponies to cross the island to a small harbour on the south side, where a boat was waiting to bear us

to Santa Eufemia, a custom-house station on the coast of Cephalonia, about half an hour's passage from Ithaca, which we accordingly passed, and arrived at the collector's mansion about 2 o'clock.

During the journey across the smaller island, I made a bold push, and succeeded in securing, with my small pony, the side-berth of Lord Byron's large brown steed, and held by him in the narrow path, to the exclusion of companions better entitled to the post. His conversation was not merely free—it was familiar and intimate, as if we were schoolboys meeting after a long separation. I happened to be "up" in the "Waverley Novels," had seen several letters of Sir Walter Scott's about his pedigree for his baronetage, could repeat almost every one of the "Rejected Addresses," and knew something of the "London Magazine" contributors, who were then in the zenith of their reputation—Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Talfourd, Browning, Allan Cunningham, Reynolds, Darley, &c. But his Lordship pointed at the higher game of Southey, Gifford (whom he all but worshipped), Jeffrey of the "Edinburgh Review," John Wilson, and other Blackwoodites. He said they were all infidels, as every man had a right to be; that Edinburgh was understood to be the seat of all infidelity, and he mentioned names (Dr. Chalmers and Andrew Thomson, for examples) among the clergy as being of the category. This I never could admit. He was particularly bitter against Southey, sneered at Wordsworth, admired Thomas Campbell, classing his "Battle of the Baltic" with the very highest of lyric productions. "Nothing finer," he said "was ever written than:

> "There was silence deep as death,
> And the boldest held his breath
> For a time."

We arrived at one of the beautiful bays that encircle the island, like a wavy wreath of silver sand studded with gold and emerald in a field of liquid pearl, and embarked in the collector's boat for the opposite shore of St. Eufemia, where, on arrival, we were received by its courteous chief, Mr. Toole, in a sort of state—with his whole establishment, French and English, uncovered and bowing. He had had notice of the illustrious poet's expected arrival, and had prepared one of the usual luxurious feasts in his honour—feasts which Lord Byron said "played the devil" with him, for he could not abstain when good eating was within his reach. The apartment assigned to us was small, and the table could not accommodate the whole party. There were, accordingly, small side or "children's tables," for such guests as might choose to be willing to take seats at them. "Ha!" said Lord Byron, "England all over—places for Tommy and Billy, and Lizzie and Molly, if there were any. Mr. ——" (addressing me), "will you be my Tommy?"—pointing to the two vacant seats at a small side-table, close to the chair of our host. Down I sat, delighted, opposite to my companion, and had a *tête-à-tête* dinner apart from the head-table, from which, as usual, we were profusely helped to the most *recherché* portions. "Verily," said his lordship, "I cannot abstain." His conversation, however, was directed chiefly to his host, from whom he received much local information, and had his admiration of Sir Thomas Maitland increased by some particulars of his system of government. There were no vacant apartments within the station, but we learned that quarters had been provided for us at a monastery on the hill of Samos, across the bay. Thither we were all transported at twilight, and ascended to the large venerable abode of some dozen of friars, who were prepared for our arrival and accommodation. Outside the walls of the building there were some open sarcophagi and some pieces of carved frieze and fragments of pottery.

I walked with his lordship and Count Gamba to examine them, speculating philosophically on their quondam contents. Something to our surprise, Lord Byron clambered over into the deepest, and lay in the bottom at full length on his back, muttering some English lines. I may have been wrong, or idly and unjustifiably curious, but I leaned over to hear what the lines might be. I found they were unconnected fragments of the scene in "Hamlet," where he moralises with Horatio on the skull:

> "Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
> Oh that that earth that held the world in awe
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw."

As he sprang out and rejoined us, he said, "Hamlet, as a whole, is original; but I do not admire him to the extent of the common opinion. More than all, he requires the very best acting. Kean did not understand the part, and one could not look at him after having seen John Kemble, whose squeaking voice was lost in his noble carriage and thorough right conception of the character. Rogers told me that Kemble used to be almost always hissed in the beginning of his career. The best actor on the stage, he said, is Charles Young. His Pierre was never equalled, and never will be." Amid such flying desultory conversation we entered the monastery, and took coffee for lack of anything else, while our servants were preparing our beds. Lord Byron retired almost immediately from the sala. Shortly afterwards we were astonished and alarmed by the entry of Dr. Bruno, wringing his hands and tearing his hair—a practice much too frequent with him—and ejaculating: "*Oh, Maria, santissima Maria, se non è già morto—cielo, perche non son morto io.*" It appeared that Lord Byron was seized with violent spasms in the stomach and liver, and his brain was excited to dangerous excess, so that he would not tolerate the presence of any person in his room. He refused all medicine, and stamped and tore all his clothes and bedding like a manaic. We could hear him

rattling and ejaculating. Poor Dr. Bruno stood lamenting in agony of mind, in anticipation of the most dire results if immediate relief was not obtained by powerful cathartics, but Lord Byron had expelled him from the room by main force. He now implored one or more of the company to go to his lordship and induce him, if possible, to save his life by taking the necessary medicine. Trelawney at once proceeded to the room, but soon returned, saying that it would require ten such as he to hold his lordship for a minute, adding that Lord Byron would not leave an unbroken article in the room. The doctor again assayed an entrance, but without success. The monks were becoming alarmed, and so, in truth, were all present. The doctor asked me to try to bring his lordship to reason; "he will thank you when he is well," he said, "but get him to take this one pill, and he will be safe." It seemed a very easy undertaking, and I went. There being no lock on the door, entry was obtained in spite of a barricade of chairs and a table within. His lordship was half-undressed, standing in a far corner like a hunted animal at bay. As I looked determined to advance in spite of his imprecations of "Baih! out, out of my sight! fiends, can I have no peace, no relief from this hell! Leave me, I say!" and he simply lifted the chair nearest to him, and hurled it direct at my head; I escaped as I best could, and returned to the sala. The matter was obviously serious, and we all counselled force and such coercive measures as might be necessary to make him swallow the curative medicine. Mr. Hamilton Browne, one of our party, now volunteered an attempt, and the silence that succeeded his entrance augured well for his success. He returned much sooner than expected, telling the doctor that he might go to sleep; Lord Byron had taken both the pills, and had lain down on my mattress and bedding, prepared for him by my servant, the only regular bed in the company, the others being trunks and portable tressels, with such softening as might be procured for the occasion. Lord Byron's beautiful and most commodious patent portmanteau bed, with every appliance that profusion of money could provide, was mine for the night.

On the following morning Lord Byron was all dejection and penitence, not expressed in words, but amply in looks and movements, till something tending to the jocular occurred to enliven him and us. Wandering from room to room, from porch to balcony, it so happened that Lord Byron stumbled upon their occupants in the act of writing accounts, journals, private letters, or memoranda. He thus came upon me on an outer roof of a part of the building while writing, as far as I recollect, these very notes of his conversation and conduct. What occurred, however, was not of much consequence—or none—and turned upon the fact that so many people were writing, when he, the great voluminous writer, so supposed, was not writing at all.

The journey of the day was to be over the Black Mountain to Argostoli, the capital of Cephalonia. We set out about noon, struggling as we best could over moor, marsh ground, and watery wastes. Lord Byron revived; and, lively on horseback, sang, at the pitch of his voice, many of Moore's melodies and stray snatches of popular songs of the time in the common style of the streets. There was nothing remarkable in the conversation. On arrival at Argostoli, the party separated—Lord Byron and Trelawney to the brig of the former lying in the offing, the rest to their several quarters in the town.

During my stay of a week, Lord Byron made himself in every way social and agreeable to the officers of the garrison, from the young subaltern to the Commander-in-chief and Resident, Colonel Napier,* and became intimate and friendly with Dr. Henry Muir, mine ancient friend and ally, with whom he corresponded, and from whom I heard much of his doings and conversation. Colonel Napier was a man in many respects akin to his lordship in disposition and temperament, had the same overweening opinion of his own superiority, the same eccentric habits of seeking notice and observation by singularity and desire to be interesting, and the same occasional displays of violence of temper. They agreed thoroughly.

During my stay I became acquainted with Staff-Assistant Surgeon Kennedy and his beautiful young wife, whose name (I mean the Doctor's) is associated with Lord Byron's for the so-called religious conversations held with him in the view of converting him from scepticism and infidelity. The doctor was an extreme specimen of the class of both sexes who think that the pious motive which they assume actuates them, while it is mere conceit and assumption of self-importance. He was a very weak person in mind and body, ignorant of the most common controversial arguments even on his own side, but by perseverance, and much more by the obvious novelty and occupation afforded to a *blase* English nobleman, he succeeded in arranging meetings for his hearing Lord Byron for two hours of controversy, if he thought fit, for the doctor's one hour. He was a shallow and ill-informed man. His book showed the results; but it did not, and could not, show the quizzing that it excited in the garrison.

I took my leave of Lord Byron and his companions with much regret, receiving from him many cordial and flattering assurances of regard, and a distinct promise of a visit to me on his way home in the spring—a promise repeated some months later through his friend and relative, Lord Sidney Osborne, on his return from seeing him in Zante.

* Afterwards General Sir Charles James Napier of Meance.

THE END.

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